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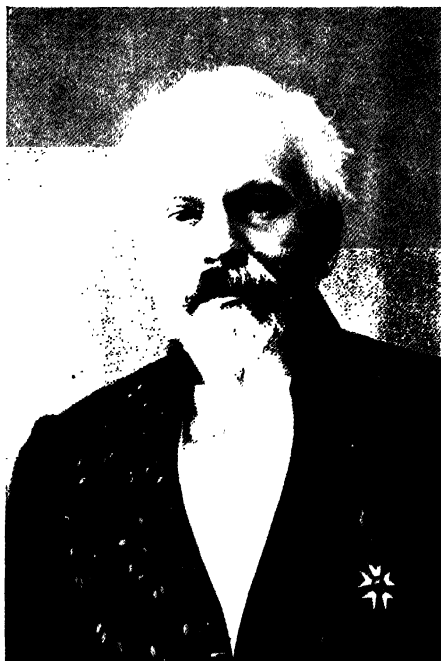
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THEIR MAJESTIES
THE KINGS



JULES LEMAITRE.

THEIR MAJESTIES
THE KINGS

By
JULES LEMAITRE

Translated by
ERNEST TRISTAN
and
G. F. MONKSHOOD



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THIS TRANSLATION
OF
"LES ROIS"
IS DEDICATED TO
G. G.

Fidem persolvere Promisso stare.

PREFACE

NOW-A-DAYS we are almost all Americans in our worship of the fierce flash-light that beats upon the throne and the enthroned. Beauty herself is not more talked of and written around than Royalty to-day, and it should be of interest in an English preface for Lemaitre's *LES ROIS* to touch upon a little of what has been done in fiction with Majesty, or Royalty, as subject matter. Of course Scott and Dumas lead the way in modern times. Where are there more fascinating kings than those who reign in Dumasia? But it would take up a whole book if one attempted their portrayal and appraisal. So we will at once say that Daudet with his *LES ROIS EN EXILE* set a fashion in fiction in France, and Stevenson with his *PRINCE OTTO* did so here. What was the result? Daudet was followed by two volumes that were master-works--without sign or shadow of doubt. They were *MAJESTY*, by the greatest living Dutch novelist, Louis Couperus, who is most unfairly neglected by English readers, even in his translated form, and *MORGANATIC*, by Max Nordau, whose work upon modern degeneration, published about ten

years ago, set the land of the mind alight from end to end. In *MAJESTY* there is a close, almost painful, study of the thoughts, the schemes, the conscience of a modern King, and his supreme spiritual struggle with the Crown Prince, his son. One scene in it alone, that between the King and his sad-hearted heir, stamps the book as of the blood-royal of true literature. *MAJESTY* should take its place in any account of the World's Great Novels. *MORGANATIC* also has two excellent character studies, a mother and son, both semi-royal, of the Meissen-Lowenstein-Franka-Level family. Nordau has written several novels of German social life in our days, but this is the best. Like the Couperus book, it is practically grave throughout, indubitably sincere; whereas the King in Daudet's book occasionally touches the fringe of farce and becomes royalty "pour rire." But we will pass to others. In England the best piece of work in this vein is *A ROYAL FAMILY*, by Robert Marshall, a writer of considerable wit, invention and distinction. *THE PRISONER OF ZENDA*, by Hope; *THE VAGABOND KING*, by Murray Cayson and L. N. Parker; *THE PRINCESS ALINE*, by R. H. Davis; *A KING'S ROMANCE*, by Vacaresco; and *THE KING OF CADONIA*, are a few of the successful titles that surge up from the sea of memory. In America books dealing more or less with mythic, and sometimes half-comic, kings and kingdoms have poured out during the last lustrum. Of these *A KING AND A FEW DUKES*, by R. W. Chambers, is "top of the heap." It has the half-comic, half-pathetic touch of *KINGS IN EXILE*, and it is well

worthy of the pointed pen that gave us *THE FIGHTING CHANCE* and the ever delightful *IOLE*.

For sheer daring and dash when using a royal personage as a character in fiction, it would be difficult to beat a little novel entitled *THE DEAR DEPARTED*, written by that astounding genius Edgar Saltus.

A man who became Lord Cloden married a very beautiful girl named Trella—"Her mouth seemed to promise more than any mortal mouth could give . . . her eyes were particularly enthralling. They were large and blue, blue as the sea, and bluer." After Cloden had made her his Countess she made a royal Duke a fool. One night Cloden saw a shadow upon a window. The shadow was H.R.H. the Duke, and the shadow led to his shroud!

Of course Saltus, who touches no theme that he does not adorn, tells the story with unfailing verve and vivid phrases. And now there lies before you a translation of Lemaitre's picturesque story of scarlet, purple and gold, *L'ES ROIS*, which we have put into English as *THEIR MAJESTIES THE KINGS*. It has had a sounding success abroad. We now hope it will be considered worthy of a similar success at home.

G. F. MONKSHOOD.

Oxford—London,

1909.

THEIR MAJESTIES THE KINGS

CHAPTER I

WHEN the Court had assembled on either side of the throne, King Christian, a very old man with a face the colour of wax, and a long white beard hanging down upon his military tunic, half hiding his ribbon of the Order of the Blue Eagle, said in a loud and commanding voice, with hardly a tremor in it :

“My Lord Chancellor, when you are ready.”

The Lord Chancellor, who was the Count of Moellnitz, standing beneath the daïs in front of a square table covered by a purple cloth with a gold fringe—just like the royal table in an historical melodrama—unrolled a parchment with a large red seal hanging from it, and slowly read in the tones of an archbishop, punctuating the phrases with an inclination of his bird-like head :

“We, Christian XVI, by the grace of God,

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King of Alfania, give our greeting to all present.

"Considering that age and illness, without diminishing our zeal for the welfare of our subjects, do not permit us to labour for that object as we should wish, and make the government of our dominions difficult to us :

"We delegate all our powers to our eldest son and heir presumptive, Hermann, Prince of Marbourg, Duke of Fridagne, for the space of one year dating from this day ;

"We command all our subjects, all the officers of our army and navy, all magistrates, governors and officials to obey the Prince of Marbourg as ourself ;

"We invoke God's blessing upon Prince Hermann, so that he may use wisely, prudently, and for the best advantage of our subjects, the power we delegate to him.

"Enacted and sealed with our royal seal in our palace of Marbourg, this 20th day of May of the year of grace 1900."

"Gentlemen," the King said, "we invite you to pay your respects to the Prince of Marbourg."

Prince Hermann, the King's eldest son, was standing on the right of the throne. He was thirty-six years of age, of medium height, and had a sparse auburn beard, a high forehead, and fine features, but he wore his uniform rather inelegantly, and looked more like a university professor than a prince of a warlike house.

The procession commenced.

First came the Princess Royal, Wilhelma, a

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quiet and somewhat cold beauty, with her face lit up for a moment by an expression of joy and triumph. Halting before the Prince her husband, she saluted him with one of those inclinations she had learned in days gone by to use in the ceremonious little Court of the Archduke her father, the rites and ceremonies of which she had scrupulously retained amid the sombre etiquette of Alfania.

To her deep inclination, which even the length of her train seemed to amplify, the Prince replied with a sad smile. Then he took his wife's hand and kissed it.

As the Princess was about to retire to her place the King signed to her to approach.

"How is my grandson?" the old man asked in an undertone.

"Very well, Sire."

"He seemed a trifle pale yesterday, and I heard this morning that he had not passed a good night."

Wilhelma raised her voice:

"I do not know where your informants obtained their information. It is true that Wilhelm is a little impressionable and nervous like other children who are intelligent and precocious. But his health, it ought to be clearly understood, gives me no cause for serious anxiety."

"Well, so much the better, daughter, so much the better," the King said in a soothing tone.

Meanwhile Hermann was receiving the congratulations of Prince Otto, his younger brother. Otto bowed his head in an affected

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fashion. He was tall, with a red pointed beard and a long sensual nose. He said, with an imperceptible sneer :

"My compliments, dear brother, my compliments."

Hermann replied :

"I accept them gratefully, Otto. I believe them to be sincere, and I am sure that you will do nothing to increase the difficulty of my task."

"Do not be too sure," Otto murmured.

But by that time, with an affectionate gesture, Hermann was holding out his hand to Prince Renaud, a big ungainly fellow with a broad forehead and fine eyes, who hesitated a little as if trying to think of the right phrase, and ended by saying softly :

"I feel sorry for you, poor Hermann."

"Thank you, my dear cousin," said the Prince. "Thank you for being present : that must have cost you a real effort."

Renaud passed on with a disdainful though uneasy mien, like a man unused to such ceremonies. Instead of the uniform to which he was entitled he wore Court dress, and the simplicity of his costume made him appear conspicuous among so many brilliant uniforms.

As Renaud was passing the double row of Maids of Honour of the Princess :

"You don't seem to be very much amused, sir," a woman's voice whispered behind him.

Renaud turned. The girl who had accosted him with this well-bred familiarity was a petite girl with delicate features, light eyes and thick red-gold hair.

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"Are you Mademoiselle Frida?" the Prince replied very cordially.

"Yes, I am used to it. Have you just returned from France, sir?"

"I was in Paris last month, Mademoiselle."

"What novelties did you see? What is happening there?"

"Some curious things. Socialism is the vogue with occult sciences, just as twenty years ago in the days of the Revolution and Mesmer. People 'Tolstoy.' There have been two or three strikes one after the other, and it has been quite the fashion to talk about them even in the drawing-rooms. They have resulted in terrible financial disasters. Add to that a series of bad harvests and a disorganized climate: there has been no spring for fifteen years. Money is scarce. Because of that people seem to go in for amusement all the more furiously. Every one seems to say: 'After me the end of the world.'"

"Yes, the end of the old world."

Frida uttered these words almost solemnly, as if talking to herself and following out her own dreams.

Renaud replied:

"Perhaps."

After a moment's silence he went on:

"If I am not mistaken, you have lived in France, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, for three years."

"And you love it?"

"With all my heart."

"Why?"

"Because it is the land where I have found

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the least hypocrisy and the most goodness. Besides, everything happens a hundred years earlier there than it does elsewhere."

Insensibly, Frida and Renaud had raised their voices, and the murmur of their conversation had become audible above the noise of the ceremony.

"That will do ! Mademoiselle de Thalberg ? " Princess Wilhelma interposed in a low voice.

The young girl blushed and was silent. When the Princess admonished Frida, Prince Hermann upon the dais frowned, and in distraction forgot to reply to the German ambassador's congratulations.

The Maids of Honour passed in their turn. As she passed in front of Hermann, Frida made a deeper and more prolonged obeisance than her companions ; but when she lifted her head she seemed to avoid the Prince's eyes, while he appeared to be examining with extraordinary attention a picture of the battle of Ragusa which faced him.

While the gorgeous procession of princes, ministers, ambassadors and chamberlains was going on, the old King Christian appeared to be dozing in his seat.

"The old monarch had memories. This joyless ceremony, which seemed to produce upon all present a feeling of constraint, distrust and discouragement, recalled to him another magnificent and cordial ceremony, the celebration of his coronation, at which the whole of Alfania, rich and poor alike, had seemed moved by the same idea. How fine it was ! With what invincible hope he had been inspired ! With

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what faith, what certain assurance of his mission, and with the divine unction fresh upon his young forehead, had he taken up his task as king.

He had made every sacrifice; he had severed from his natural affections everything which did not accord with his duty as sovereign, and everything which might have diverted him from it. He had almost ignored pleasure, avoiding women and making no distinction between them. His marriage being entirely political, was only the sanction of an alliance with a neighbouring country. For thirty years he had patiently endured a wife, good without a doubt, and imbued with the duties of her position, but a woman without grace, though rigidly virtuous and devout.

At first his zeal and abnegation were recompensed. A war with Austria, gallantly conducted, and the cost largely borne by his private purse, had righted the frontiers of Alfania. His people adored him. By his rigid economy and scrupulous application to business, the kingdom prospered. The natural resources of the soil were, for the first time, seriously exploited, and industry developed suddenly to surprising proportions. But then a singular fact transpired. In this kingdom, which formerly was protected against revolutionary contagion by its geographical situation, where the absolute monarchy since its inception had remained quite intact, the rapidity of industrial progress had the extraordinary effect of placing social questions even before political ones. Losing their habits of poverty and re-

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signation, the workers of the capital and of the large cities little by little became disaffected, and held their King responsible for the iniquity of their condition, although they were indebted to him for the improved conditions which enabled them to feel the more acutely this iniquity. Terrible strikes arose, which the King repressed by force, like a man unaccustomed to doubt his own powers or to tremble in the face of his duty.

So, after fifty years' labour, he saw himself misunderstood by those for whom he had toiled, hated by some, suspected by others, but still respected by the rich, though they, too, considered him incapable, because of his great age, either to resist the evil by force, or to remedy it by apparent concession to the "new ideas." In short, he was to some a tyrant and to the others an "old man."

It was that, more than illness and infirmity, which had decided him to delegate his power to his eldest son. Hermann posed as a Liberal; the mob loved him and awaited the much-advertised "reforms." The son, whose honesty and integrity he could not help admiring, had always grieved King Christian by the strangeness of his conduct and ideas, of those at least which he ventilated, was taciturn, secretive, fond of solitude, a stranger to military matters, a hater of all pomp and display, melancholy and studious. There was no idea in common between the Prince and his wife, the haughty Wilhelma, a princess of the old nobility and archduchess to her very soul, a calm and energetic woman, with whom the old King felt

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himself to be in agreement both in principles and belief. If only she could have exercised some influence over her husband. But for a long while Hermann, wrapped up in his own day-dreams, had discouraged her by his gentle and silent obstinacy. It was to this son of whom he was so doubtful that the old man felt himself constrained to entrust his realm: ah, he was a mysterious and alarming trustee!

Had he, at any rate, any consolation in his other son? Prince Otto was a brute; steeped in vice, overwhelmed with debt, the guest and client of all Jewish financiers, he spent half his time in Paris as a Prince of the Boulevards and the night restaurants.

As for Prince Renaud, the King's nephew, an orphan from his childhood (how frequent deaths are in these ancient royal families!) he had been brought up in solitude, he appeared at Court about once a year, lived in the companionship of artists, poets and journalists, and publicly displayed his disdain for, or rather his ignorance of, his birth and rank.

That was the whole of the royal house! For it would hardly be right to include Hermann's son, little Prince Wilhelm, a puny, ailing child of five, who without a doubt would not live. Yet his mother was healthy and robust, and his father had spent a chaste youth. Whose sins was this child expiating? The gay madness of his ancestor Christian XI, or the erotic folly of his great-great-grandmother Queen Ortrude? Or was he paying the penalty of physical and moral overwork, or the superhuman labours of that long line of princes,

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statesmen, and soldiers, who strained all their lives in interrupted effort and almost all died at their post? Or else several centuries of inter-marriage among relatives or purely political alliances, ill-assorted and loveless, had finally left in the veins of the last of the house of Marbourg only corrupted and discoloured blood?

Poor race of kings! As its blood became impoverished, so its soul also seemed to fail. Moreover, it was so in the whole of Europe: the majority of the members of the reigning families displayed a diminution of faith and royal virtues, lassitude, and disenchantment, or else a fear of sovereignty. They seemed bored at being apart; in them could be seen a desire to return to normal everyday life, as if the *isolation of their majesty weighed upon them* and they experienced from it more weariness than pride. Not only did many of them affect to live in the same way as their subjects, and if they retained a remnant of ceremonial, it was from necessity, but they felt like private individuals, and all the moral maladies of the century invaded the ruling houses.

With increasing sorrow the old King passed in review a list of the sovereigns of the time. One was a neurotic Empress, a slave of morphia, and in public the friend of a circus equestrienne. Another a scribbling Queen, who, though able to exercise the functions of a Queen, preferred the profession of literature, soliciting the approval of her burgess colleagues by the publication of her works in all languages, and competing for academy prizes.

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A third was a morose King who never appeared before his subjects, thought of nothing but economy for the purpose of organizing scientific expeditions, and only aspired to fame in geographical circles. Quite recently, too, a music-mad Prince with the soul of a low-comedian had one night drowned himself among the swans in a lake with a scenic background. Another Prince had committed suicide with his mistress, while a third had married a dancer. For some years royal families had furnished the larger proportion of the miscellaneous news. Rulers confessed that they were like other men. There only remained, of sovereigns who believed in their divine right, the Emperor of Germany, the Tsar, and the Emperor of Turkey, besides himself, the old King of Alfania. The others believed at the most in the utility of their public mission and of the tradition of which they were the representatives.

Yet Republican France, a prey to chronic disorder and shaken by feverish eruptions, exhausted her strength in organizing State Socialism, and persisted in this fatal experiment. In Spain a Republic had been established for five years. In England, Belgium and Italy the monarchy tottered. Something was getting out of shape in Europe. •

"Alas!" thought Christian XVI, "kings vanish because they have no longer faith."

CHAPTER II

AFTER the ceremony the King called his heir-apparent to him.

The royal study, an apartment massive in its architecture and sumptuous with its old gold softened by time, was full of souvenirs of past centuries. In a niche upon a golden pedestal stood a bronze statue of Christian I, the founder of the realm, helmed with two eagles' wings, his hands upon a mighty sword, which he seemed to be thrusting into the earth in front of him like a cross. The couch upon which Christian XVI was seated, a simple oak piece of furniture, almost barbarian in appearance, and remarkable only for its massiveness, was that of Otto III, the most famous ruler of the dynasty. From one of the windows could be seen across the river the Byzantine dome of the cathedral of Marbourg, where for nine hundred years all the kings of Alfania had been consecrated.

Hermann approached with respectful but constrained mien. There had never been the least sympathy between father and son, either because the latter was incapable of confidence or because they were incomprehensible to each other. In his weakness, with dimmed eyes, his limbs drawn with rheumatism, and occupying

but a corner of Otto III's monumental chair, Christian XVI still bore a resemblance, in the shape and expression of his face, to the pictures of the kings around him, covering the walls of this ancient apartment, almost all of whom were those of robust, energetic and vigorous men. He was surely a member of their race. But Prince Hermann, with his *refined and gentle features*, appeared of a different family. He seemed, in the face of this motionless gallery of commanding countenances, to be a studious scholar who had strayed into an assembly of noble barons.

Silence was prolonged. At last the King made an effort, and slowly, with solemn gravity, said :

"My son, I know that you are good, laborious, and attentive to your duties, and I know into what pure loyal hands I have just placed my authority. Yet I cannot help being uneasy. The position is a difficult one. The people, forgetting that, however great their misery, the most efficacious way of remedying it is to trust in the rulers God has given them—who will not betray them, since the King's interest is the same as his subjects', and the King forms with them one and the same soul—the people are becoming mutinous and clamouring for what they call reform. I had to choose between a hazardous resistance and concessions which I consider still more dangerous. I have no longer the strength for resistance. I did not think it right to give way. My son, do whatever God inspires you. I beg of you, only, to beware of a certain sentimentality which

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“But if it happened that your ideas were in opposition to those of a considerable proportion of your people, the blindest of them and those most dominated by their instincts, what would you do?”

“It could only be a misunderstanding, since I shall never desire anything but their welfare. I should set to work to sweep away the misapprehension by some striking example of my kindness to them.”

“But if they refused to understand?”

“I would force my wishes upon them, knowing them to be honourable and good.”

“Even by force?”

“I am confident that they would never reduce me to that necessity.”

“If, however, they did reduce you to it?”

“I should then be the unhappiest of men, but I should do my duty.”

“Yes, but even in thinking of it you are frightened beforehand. Why is that, if not *because your will and judgment have no support outside yourself? There are in the profession of king duties so terrible that a man would not have the courage to perform them if he did not feel himself to be enlightened and sustained by a divine thought and will.*”

“The sentiment of justice, respect for the human being, and charity for the human race will be sufficient lights for me. Seeing clearly, I shall know how to act.”

“What do you desire to do?”

“Prepare a social state in which the sufferings of individuals may be diminished, and to that end first of all diminish the inequality of rights.”

“Do you think that suffering can be suppressed by laws and institutions? It is not even diminished, for as fast as man’s material condition is ameliorated he discovers fresh ways of suffering. The real object of royalty is the maintenance of an hierarchy desired by God, by which subsists order, that greatest blessing of races, when each one in his place, obeying and devoting himself, works for his eternal safety. Sorrow in creatures is perhaps one of Providence’s designs.”

“Then it is a design which you must forgive me for not adoring. I think of what the life of a miner must be when, after labouring underground for twelve hours a day, he earns just enough to prevent his wife and children from starving. I am thinking of those still more wretched, and my heart is troubled. As for the social hierarchy of which you have spoken, I am ignorant as to whether it is the work of God, but I know that it was originally the *work of man’s violence, and that diminishes the respect with which it inspires me. For the first time in my life, father, I am laying bare my thoughts to you. Do you not desire it?*”

“We do not speak the same language, my son. We could talk like this for a long time without understanding each other. That is strange. You have been a good son, you spent a studious youth, and I have never had to reproach you with anything, but there has always been between us something which separates us. It is not my fault. Your education has been one of my greatest cares, and I have striven to form in you, either by teach-

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ing or example, a royal soul. You allowed me, you were not disobedient; but each day I have felt that you were drifting further away from me."

The old man was silent. A tear too small to be shed stood in the corner of each of his eyes, dim with age. He went on :

"Alas ! I long ago asked myself whether the experiment you wish to try was permissible. Try it according to your conscience, since necessity compels it. I am at least sure of your honour and good faith, and I am convinced that the exercise of power will rid you of your doubts and fancies. From the seclusion of the retreat where I mean to spend my remaining days, I shall pray God to enlighten and fortify you, and take you and my kingdom under His holy protection."

Emotion overcame Hermann, dimmed his eyes, and made him nervously twist his drooping moustache.

"Dear father," he said, "I fear that during our conversation my words have exceeded my thoughts. I am so troubled, you see ! You are right : action communicates faith, and I am reckoning upon the peace which the gospel promises to men with good intent."

With a motion which gave the lie to part of his previous conversation, Hermann bowed his knee and said :

"Father, bless me."

CHAPTER III

HERMANN, on his return to his own apartments, was annoyed with himself. What sentiment was it that had led him to say things to his father which he could not understand? What weakness led him to afterwards deny what he had confessed?

"How little mastery I have over myself!" he angrily murmured.

His eyes rested upon an old picture hanging above his writing-table. It was the portrait of one of his ancestors, Hermann II, who had murdered his brother because he distrusted him, poisoned his first wife in order to be able to contract a marriage more advantageous to the country, and drowned in blood a revolt of famished peasants. He passed for a great king. Historians excused him; some glorified him: had not all his crimes been committed either to save the crown, or to assure the unity of the realm?

This old picture was, too, a masterpiece completed and embellished by time. From a background which had become quite black, stood out a yellow head all nose and teeth, with hard eyes of uncomfortable fixity. The right hand emerged in the foreground, it was

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a terrible hand which clasped the sceptre like a club.

"Ah!" Hermann thought, "if I had the energy of that brute, to wish in the opposite direction to that in which his wishes lay!"

The portrait of his fierce predecessor Hermann kept there under his eyes as a memento of all that he had sworn to avoid, of everything most horrifying to him in the world: pride of domination, brutality, cruelty and dogmatism, for his grandfather, the murderer, had been a believer, from piety as much as from politics, and a zealous protector of the Church.

How could he, the final member of the race, differ to this extent, not only in taste and culture, but also in his inmost soul, from his ferocious ancestors?

His past life came back to him haphazard, in *brief visions*. First he saw his *loveless childhood*, and his submission at an early age to severe discipline. How he had cried when at the age of eight he was first dressed in the uniform of an officer of the Guard! With an obstinacy of which he could not have given the reason, he resisted in tears, as if he foresaw that this first uniform was an enlistment and for life. He could see the big heavy hand of his angry father descend upon him that day. Moreover, that outbreak of childish despair had been his only external revolt. Since then, he had in appearance submitted to everything; he had endured in silence his destiny as Prince Royal.

Had he been loved by his father and mother? Perhaps. He did not know. He was tempted

to believe that one person alone had really loved him: the first of his tutors, an old professor of the university of Marbourg, a good and gentle man of extreme timidity, who trembled like a leaf when the King appeared during lesson-times. But as he taught them facts about the Greeks and Romans became as interesting as stories. Hermann still recollected how he had wept with enthusiasm over Harmodius and Aristogiton, the Gracchi, over Spartacus and the legend of William Tell. Why had he at an interval of thirty years retained those in particular of the old professor's lessons? He remembered, too, that he had one day discovered in the good man's library books which described marvellous countries, without either rich or poor, where men were all shepherds and good, and other books also in which the words "wages" and "capital" frequently recurred, and which had made him understand that there were many unhappy people on the earth. But his old master, who was so gentle, so amusing, and often took him on his knee during lessons, one day disappeared, and Hermann never found out what had become of him.

Then he remembered a disturbance at which he had assisted from one of the palace windows. It was caused by men in rags, some of them very evil-looking, led by one bearing a black flag. Suddenly the sound of firing. Men fell with open mouths, a woman lay covered with blood upon the pavement, while other women fled screaming. The royal child had then begun to cry (it did not take much to

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make him cry in these days), and asked: "Why have they been hurt?" His tutor pulled him away from the window, to which the child clung in order still to watch a sight which caused him so much fear.

He could see himself, in later years, travelling in Germany, and assiduously completing a course in philosophy at Heidelberg. The professor, a celebrated man of world-wide renown, who in his lectures carried his ideas to their conclusion, and who, finding in metaphysics a kind of intoxication, was led into the most extreme daring in destruction and speculative reconstruction, was none the less in real life a respecter of useful contingencies, greedy of honours, decoration, and position, and profoundly impressed by earthly power and greatness. But by these exercises in reasoning thought Hermann, being perfectly sincere, was entirely purged of any remnant of involuntary prejudice of birth or education. While he destroyed and reconstructed the world in his head, and applied himself to the consideration of everything from the universal and absolute point of view, he really freed his moral person from the accident which had caused him to be born for the throne, and not only in his manners and opinions, but to the bottom of his soul—in the same way that a Christian casts off the "old man"—did he discard the Prince.

His stay in Paris completed his mental transformation. Hermann lived in Paris for a few months, in a real incognito, thinking that to be the only way for a Prince to gain an accurate insight into life. A Prince can only live as a

Prince in an extremely circumscribed world; he is only on the same level as a very small number of persons: he therefore can only know men imperfectly. He only sees them from a very small and direct angle in a respectful and distrustful attitude. Everywhere, almost, he bores or is bored. He lives and dies in isolation from the rest of humanity. He only sees of the great comedy a few specially prepared fragments. His presence is sufficient to change the character of the functions at which he assists, and nothing is sincere for him.

Hermann had desired to shake off the excess of servitude, which in the cases of Princes is added to the servitude which always weighs upon human judgment. He had arranged to live in Paris freely, to mix unrestrainedly with humanity, to gain experience of Society in all its grades, picturesque aspects and moral recesses, and even to rub shoulders with extreme misery and gaze upon it from close quarters.

He had loved Paris. The spirit of the joyous city, the irony and lack of respect in its atmosphere, had surprised and charmed Hermann, without his noticing how thin the irony was and how much foolery and snobbishness it sometimes concealed. In particular he had conceived real esteem for the light, non-pedantic scepticism, verging on indifference which, although only superficial, is often found in cases of extreme wisdom, and with a gentleness which, although inactive, in some cases is equal to charity itself.

But at the same time fear of not thinking

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freely, of retaining unknown to himself a little royal and aristocratic prejudice, of still thinking himself to be, in the depths of his conscience, moulded of different clay to the common horde, and of surprising in his judgments, actions and gestures the effects of this secret involuntary persuasion produced in him an unhealthy anxiety. He would willingly have instructed a servant to repeat to him all day and every day: "Remember that a Prince is only a man." He was afraid, if such an expression is allowable, of the blood coursing through his veins. This apprehension, this continual guard over himself, communicated to his demeanour and his whole conduct a constraint and uncertainty which had the effect of reversing sudden and excessive decisions.

If he had no sympathy with the Princess Royal, it was not because he had married her without choosing her himself. The marriage, which had been contracted for national and dynastic interests, might have been a happy one. Wilhelma was beautiful, intelligent, virtuous, and it did not seem to require heroic efforts to love her. Neither was it the difference in their characters nor in their opinions concerning the general duties of royalty, nor particular political questions which had gradually estranged them. It was something more inward, more irrevocable. The thing most displeasing to Hermann, most annoying to him amid all this woman's virtue and grace, was a certain imperturbable complaisance in the sentiment of her birth and rank; he could see a beatitude of unexpressed pride behind the most

trifling actions and every one of the words of the Archduke's daughter; he had a feeling that it was in vain for Wilhelma to be gentle and kind to the little ones, for she considered herself of inestimably superior substance to every one not of royal blood; he considered the religious faith and piety of the charming woman of no account, and that the religious maxims about equality before God would always be to her empty formulæ which she repeated with her lips, while, though good and compassionate to people, she would never be "fraternal." To remark every moment in this honourable Princess, serene in conscience through the pre-excellence of her nature, to see spread stupidly in her a sentiment which he had implacably eradicated from his own heart, excited in the Prince something like hateful and demagogic anger.

So a divorce was completed between his exterior life and his inmost thoughts. His father being often ill, he had been obliged of late, in his quality of heir apparent, to live a life of parade and display, which, even reduced to the indispensable minimum, sufficed to fill him with *ennui*. He was somewhat in the position of a priest who has ceased to believe, and who continues to celebrate Mass. He hated the members of his Court: chamberlains, high officials and dignitaries, all of whom were important, futile and hard-hearted. He could feel about him, in a quiet and a respectful way, the distrust of all these people, and behind them the already nearly hostile expectation of the nobility, the wealthy middle classes,

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the exalted clergy, in fact, of every privileged class. Without a doubt it was in name unbounded power which his father had handed over to him, but in reality the power was only absolute on the condition that he acted according to the direction of the secular institutions which owed their origin to him and served as his support. What an enormous mass of opposing wills, of interests and of traditions he had to break to do his duty ! Would he have the strength to do it ?

With his elbows upon the table, his forehead resting on his hands, he said in a low voice :

“ Ah ! Frida ! little Frida ! what should I become if I had not you ? ”

CHAPTER IV

WILHELMA entered, glorious in her beauty, with the train of her Court dress, which she had not had time to change, trailing behind her.

Hermann got up looking bored.

"To what do I owe the honour?"

"I desired," she replied, "to be the first to congratulate you after the ceremony."

"I am greatly touched," Hermann said. He added in a slightly ironical tone:

"You must be very happy, for you are Queen now, or practically so."

"Happy, yes, but uneasy as well. May God aid you, Hermann, and point out your duty to you!"

"Which means," he quickly replied, "that in your opinion I do not see in what direction it lies? Yes, I know in advance that you do not approve of my plans and that your feelings are at present divided between joy at seeing absolute power in my hands and terror at what I am about to do. All the same I thank you for your kind words."

"Alas!" she said, "I am quite aware how useless they are. For years, though living side by side, we have been as far apart as if oceans and mountains separated us."

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He made a gesture of protest.

"Oh! the rupture has not been made public. I could not even say when it first came about. It has been more an alienation than a rupture. I know that you have preserved appearances. The Prince my husband" (she smiled sadly) "continues to pay official visits on certain days to my chamber. But all the same I am only in your eyes the Princess Royal: I am not your wife."

Designedly or by chance she had sat down on a stool almost at Hermann's feet, with her head bent forward in an attitude which displayed the plump curve of her back and her robust neck.

But he replied very coldly:

"It was at your desire. Remember how we were married. You were brought up in a little, old-fashioned but proud Court, like an arch-duchess of two centuries ago. I myself, once freed from the inhuman discipline to which my father had subjected me in my youth, had lived as far as was possible like an ordinary student, and then like a traveller, so my dream was to continue to live like a private individual. We had never seen each other. However, I was hopeful: I reckoned on finding you a woman, and I set myself to love you for your youth, your beauty and the loyalty of your character. But you seemed as if you were frozen into your rôle; you adored the display I detested, and even in our intimate conversation, which you reduced to a minimum, your sentiments and gestures retained an official and royal character."

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"Yes, the air of the Altenbourgs, as you called it. That same air you found in my father and in all the family portraits. But it is not a crime to be like one's ancestors, is it?"

"No; but that air signified in some way that you had of yourself, of your function, of love, life, and everything else, an idea which could never be mine, and that I should always astonish and scandalize you whatever I did. So that air has gradually discouraged and congealed my tenderness."

"It is possible," the Princess murmured in low, gentle and submissive tones. "I do not recriminate. There is no time now. Because I did not love you in plebeian fashion, you thought I did not love you."

She uttered these words like an involuntary confession, as she threw back her head with a motion which seemed to offer to him her beautiful shoulders and blonde throat, and she seemed to be endeavouring to catch her husband's eye.

But he did not look at her.

She got up quickly and her pride returning, she went on in somewhat sad tones:

"But what is done is done. You held aloof from me, believing that I was withdrawing from you. I resigned myself. I do you the justice to believe that our misunderstanding remained a personal matter between us; that if you have forsaken me, it is for an idea, for a dream, and the place I have lost in your heart at least no other woman has taken."

He thought he could see, in this affectation of confidence, a hidden allusion, and the in-

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direct expression of suspicion. She surprised his frown, and entirely dominating her feelings, went on :

"But why am I talking like that to you? Once more I have come to offer you the homage of the first, most devoted and faithful of your subjects. I only add: Take care, King, son of a king, as to what you do. So that you may the better remember my warning, I have ordered your son to be brought to you."

She had resumed her majestic manner and the imperturbable air of majesty of the Altenbourgs. That was the reason he, while she opened the door herself, smiled an ironical and harassed smile.

The governess, Madame de Schliefen, an old lady, gaunt and dignified, pushed in front of her a puny child with a pretty enough face, but too large a head and a sleepy manner.

A deeply sorrowful expression clouded Hermann's face. He loved his little boy dearly, but his sight pained him. The idea of the mysterious injustice, of which this child was the victim, the irony of a destiny which gave as *the final offspring of a race of powerful kings*, this poor little gnome, filled Hermann so full of the bitterness of revolt and protestation that this strong sentiment often deprived his paternal affection of the possibility of expression. Besides, he must quite rightly abandon to the mother the care of bringing up his delicate child, and he knew what lessons in pretentious dignity (at the age of five!), in professional pride and imbecile etiquette were

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already being instilled into this royal abortion. He believed that the day the child was grown up—supposing that he lived as long—he would find in him a false heart and a head full of vain foolishness, which it would then be too late to alter, so that the haughty mother and starchy governess were doubtless at that moment engaged in taking away from him for ever his son's soul.

"Come, Wilhelm," the Princess said.

She took the child by the hand and led him to the Prince.

"Kiss your father. Since a short time ago,—listen carefully,—not only your grandfather, but your father as well is King."

"Don't talk to him of such things," Hermann said sharply. "How do you expect him to understand?"

Little Wilhelm bent his head in fear. Hermann kissed him on the forehead, looked at him for a moment, and turning to the governess said :

"How pale he is ! Did he sleep well ? "

"Yes, sir," the old lady replied.

"Is his appetite good ? "

"Yes, sir, and he played after his lunch."

"With whom ? "

"By himself, sir."

"The sons of the master of the hounds and the equerry are about the same age, and I gave instructions——"

"Yes, sir; but those children took such liberties with His Royal Highness."

"Did they fight ? "

"Yes, sir."

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"Ah, well, all he had to do was to defend himself."

The Princess intervened :

"You are not speaking seriously, Hermann?"

"Poor little fellow!" the Prince said. "What you want is fresh air, a free and natural life, fights with the other children, and the least possible deference. Only your companions already treat you like a little king, and that is horrible, or else they forget to respect you, and then you are recalled to the sentiment of the hierarchy. Besides," he went on, as he felt the child's arms, which were as fragile as a bird's little bones, "perhaps they are right, for you are scarcely in a fit state to defend yourself. Run along, little one, and play alone."

The Prince said that in such sad and bitter tones that the frightened child burst into tears.

"What is the matter? He thought I was scolding him. I am stupid."

Hermann took the child on his knees, pressed him to his breast, resting his beard upon the little moist cheek.

"Wilhelm, my darling, what is the matter? I am not scolding you. Quite the contrary. I am your loving papa. Shall I give you a pretty plaything? Shall I tell you a pretty story?"

The child shook his head. Playing made him tired. His favourite amusement was to remain motionless for hours at a time on his little couch as if in state. As to pretty stories, his heart was still too full to listen to them.

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He had left off crying, but was shaken by the remnant of his sobs as he threw his arms around Hermann's neck.

Then Wilhelma, still pursuing the same line of thought, interposed :

"As you love him, Hermann, think of him and preserve his inheritance."

"Well, that inheritance is not endangered as far as I know. But what is that?"

From without a loud, joyful-sound arose, with this cry occasionally intelligible :

"Long live Prince Hermann!"

"Do you hear? The people have just read my proclamation."

"You promise them everything : that is easy. But what are you going to give them to-morrow?"

Without making any reply, Hermann opened the window. The shouting sounded more clearly and distinctly in the palace. It increased still more as Hermann stepped out on to the balcony. Turning suddenly pale, as if the human waves had given him a vertigo, all he could say was :

"Thank you, friends, thank you."

Instinctively,—for in spite of herself these acclamations intoxicated her—Wilhelma took a few steps to rejoin her husband. She stopped on reflecting that the ovation was addressed to ideas which she condemned with all her heart, and in her loyalty she did not wish to surprise and attract to herself part of the people's gratitude.

But when her eyes fell upon little Wilhelm, who was laughing with delighted curiosity at this great shout of triumph :

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"Hermann," she cried, "show them your son!"

"Oh yes, father," the child said.

He lifted his gnome's head and became suddenly as serious as an idol, and prepared for the homage of the crowd.

Hermann shrugged his shoulders.

"Show him to them? For what object? No, madam. Demonstrations like this are not good for children."

He gently closed the window. When he turned round he saw little Wilhelm weeping with rage, with his governess on her knees beside him showering respectful consolation upon him.

"Sir! Sir! a Prince ought never to cry," the old lady was saying. "Your Royal Highness causes me real grief."

"Take him away," the father quietly said.

CHAPTER V

"You know, my Lord Chancellor, the contents of my proclamation to the people, since you countersigned it?"

The Count de Moellnitz bowed.

"May I be permitted to recall to your Royal Highness that my signature was only to authenticate your own, and that is its only signification?"

"I know it, sir, and it was my ideas, and my ideas only, which I wished to make known to the people. I none the less owe you a sincere exposition of my intentions. The strikes which for so many months have caused such ruin in this unfortunate land, seem to have terminated, rather because of the impossibility of the workers to continue the struggle, than on account of the masters' concessions, which have been insufficient."

The Count de Moellnitz protested with a slight smile and a discreet toss of the chin.

"At least that is my opinion," Hermann went on. "As soon as it became known that the King was about to delegate his powers to me, a great pacification took place. The people are waiting. By my past conduct and the

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sentiments which I have expressed I have made a kind of tacit agreement with them. I will keep it. An idea has spread among the workers that the solution of social questions depends upon a preliminary reform of political institutions. That view is not incorrect. I am about to submit to the Council, the composition of which I have notified you, two connected bills concerning the franchise and representation."

The Prince moved the papers on his desk. The Count de Moellnitz had awaited, without flinching, the end of the speech. His shadowy smile continued to express the intellectual security of a man who has never thought. Evidently the ideas enclosed in his little forehead, round and hard, were poor and not numerous, but they were well ordered, tenacious, and all the more unchangeable because they were not original. They were but ideas of his birth, rank, fortune and career. He was one of those men incapable of conceiving and imagining a soul or life different to his own, not even had the possibility of another social state than the one by which he had profited, and which was, by the accident of birth, exactly adapted to his personal interest, occurred to him. Even when a man of this sort appears to be thinking and acting, he is only making the gestures of action and the outward semblance of thought; but he makes these gestures imperturbably, and they are always of the same sort, so that his moral automatism becomes an enormous and irreducible force. Puppets these men are, but puppets of a tradition which can have its great-

ness and its object; and that is why these men appear in the guise of politicians, orators and honourable men. The Count de Moellnitz's authority and his recognized honesty of purpose came to him from persistence in his original automatism. He aped the gestures of the noble lord, the diplomatist and the minister of an absolute monarchy very well. He had the head of an old bird, but it was a heraldic bird.

So he assumed an air of incomparable dignity when he replied:

"Sir, I have the honour to offer to your Royal Highness my own resignation and that of my colleagues."

"I accept it, Monsieur de Moellnitz," Hermann said. "To-morrow I will choose another ministry."

The Count believed it his duty to add a somewhat daring phrase, the words, as it were, of the loyal old servant, to which he imparted as much "noble frankness" as appeared advisable.

"I beg your Highness not to doubt my devotion. But I am persuaded in my mind and conscience, that the ruin of the country and consequently our own ruin will follow."

"We shall see," Hermann said.

"At least, your Royal Highness will remember one day that I dared to warn you? If my conscience does not allow me to aid you in destroying (excuse the boldness of my words, which are inspired only by my desire for the welfare of the country), be sure that my devotion will remain at the service of your Royal

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Highness when the time comes to repair the mistake."

"I do not doubt it," Hermann said, with a smile. "I know you to be one of those whose services can always be procured if desired."

CHAPTER VI

IN the evening a ball was given at the Palace on the occasion of the delegation of power to the heir-apparent. Hermann occupied a position in the drawing-room reserved for Princes, the officers of their suites, Princesses and their maids of honour, for ministers and members of diplomatic bodies.

Through three great open doors leading to other apartments by the glare of the electric light the crowds in the ball-room could be seen passing and repassing: a mixture of sombre rigid uniforms contrasting with the white, red and mauve of the moving gowns, of moustaches overhanging bare necks and shoulders, and of trains winding around the scabbards of swords while the sparkle of the women's diamonds had its counterpart in the men's decorations.

Hermann told himself that among the privileged guests who were present, there was no one perhaps whom he did not inspire with secret or open distrust, no one who would not be his enemy as soon as his plans were made known.

"If they knew in whose honour they were dancing!" he thought.

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He had withdrawn from the circle of the ambassadors and high officers of the Court. He approached a little woman, still young and pretty enough, though delicate looking, who was sitting apart.

She was Princess Gertrude, wife of Prince Otto.

She had just got rid of her ladies-in-waiting by allowing them all to dance at the same time ("For I am not good company, my poor girls"), and she was watching the scene with a vacant look, and an absent manner.

But as she held out her hand to Hermann with a pleasant, almost happy smile, she said :

"Thank you for what you have once more done for me."

She was always penniless, as Otto extorted from her every penny she possessed, and often she had not the money to pay her servants or meet the necessary expenses of her house. When her distress was very great, she turned to Hermann, who provided her with a little money from his private purse.

"But perhaps," Hermann charitably said, "he is a little more reasonable?"

"Oh yes, yes!" she quickly replied. "I have not had to complain of him since the last affair."

"The last affair" had been the sudden discovery of the pregnancy of one of Princess Gertrude's ladies-in-waiting: the young girl had been seized in the ball-room by a suspicious illness, and after being hastily undressed in the embrasure of a window, had recovered from her faint and told her mistress,

between broken-hearted sobs, that her seducer was Prince Otto. The affair had been hushed up as far as possible, the girl sent home and her father, a member of a poor but aristocratic family, had been indemnified with a lucrative post.

Gertrude had forgiven. She loved her husband.

"He is not wicked, I assure you. He is only weak and easily led. He is charming, when he likes. He has seen his mistake, and after that sad affair, been much kinder to me than he had been for some time."

Hermann looked at her attentively. He noticed her extreme thinness; he could see that she had lost her eyelashes, and through the slight tanning of her forehead a pale band of a finger's width was also visible, where the hair had fallen out and where her head-dress failed to cover it.

"You are not well, dear friend," he ejaculated.

"Not very. But really I have no chance to be. You know, for I have never concealed anything from you, that Otto has quite abandoned me. Almost immediately after he had returned and behaved so lovingly and tenderly to me I fell ill. I chose the time well!"

Hermann thought:

"Poor innocent! He came back to you because he needed money, and having mortally offended you he had no other way of obtaining it. He was more infamous in returning than ever he was in leaving you. Your illness is the same as that from which your maid-of-

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honour is dying at her respectable home. You do not know the whole truth. Neither do I! Only the secret police, the money-lenders and the courtesans of this beautiful city really know my delightful brother."

He abruptly left Princess Gertrude. He had just noticed at the other end of the ball-room Otto and Frida de Thalberg. Their conversation seemed animated, for his brother was chuckling with his big nose close to the young girl's neck and milk-white shoulders; she was frowning and blushing a little.

Otto had joined her just as she reached one of the doors leading to the terrace with the words :

"Allow me to accompany you, mademoiselle."

As she stopped in surprise, he added, in his sneering way :

"Have you changed your mind about going outside? Are you afraid of me?"

He swayed on his long legs as he sought for a subject to talk about, and then, recollecting the incident of the afternoon, he added :

"Ah well! were you scolded? The Princess is rather severe, is she not?"

"I was in the wrong, sir."

"Confess that Court etiquette does not altogether suit you."

"No; but I am not properly acquainted with it. I was brought up like a savage, you know."

"But I think you are very nice as you are."

Obviously he was very much taken with her. Standing slightly behind and looking down upon

her he inhaled the perfume from her as from a red flower. His dull eyes beneath their heavy lids emitted little gleams, and his head, that of a man of the world and a beast of prey, was tense with brutal desire and seemed to lengthen.

"I am always very pleased to meet you. I have already told you that we should understand each other admirably if you would, and we should be very quickly good friends."

"But I don't think we are enemies, sir."

"Don't pretend not to understand me."

"What is there to understand?"

The glacial purity of two impassive eyes disconcerted Prince Otto for a moment.

He went on:

"What was your long conversation with my Cousin Renaud about?"

"I asked him the news from Paris, sir."

"Ah, Paris! Paris!" the Prince murmured in penetrating tones. (God knows what pictures the name brought to his memory.) "I am going there next month."

He whispered in Frida's ear:

"Will you come with me?"

"Where?"

"To Paris."

"I should like nothing better," Frida replied, affecting to laugh.

"Suppose I took you at your word? . Don't make that face. There is nothing extraordinary in my proposal. I know you better than you think I do, Mademoiselle de Thalberg. You are very intelligent, and being possessed of an independent spirit are at heart a little revolutionary. You know the real value of

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most of the conventions which regulate woman's conduct. I don't think you find a very powerful attraction in the duties of a lady-in-waiting to the Princess Royal, nor do you intend to spend your life in that position, I feel sure. On the other hand, as you come of an aristocratic but poor family, your only hope can be marriage with some old gentleman whose nurse you would have to be. It is a melancholy destiny. Under these circumstances what harm can you see in enjoying a liberty, the use of which, I know, no prejudice forbids you, and accompanying a man who is absolutely devoted to you? "

Insensibly he had driven Frida before him into a corner of the ball-room. The young girl sat down, and replied, playing with her fan the while, in the most unconcerned fashion in the world.

"Tell me, sir, if my great-uncle the Marquis de Frauenlaub were not eighty years of age, if I were not alone in the world without any other natural defender than the King, whose aid you know very well I will not ask, would you have dared to speak to me as you did just now? "

"Oh, those phrases!" Otto said. "I thought you were more intelligent."

"Your reasoning is very unsound, sir. Supposing even that I possessed the revolutionary spirit with which you wish to endow me, with what sentiments do you think a Prince of your character, who lives as you live, could inspire me? "

She separated and accentuated the words

quietly and contemptuously. He began to sneer :

"You are sweet, when you are angry."

"I have given you no right to speak to me in that fashion, sir."

"I am talking to you in a friendly way. If you take it like that, let us consider that my words were never uttered. My proposal only becomes offensive when it is badly-received : otherwise it is a compliment. I could not tell how you would receive it. Do not mention it again. I do not wish you to. I have been told I should be too late, and I know the respect due to an elder brother."

Frida got up quickly and, quivering with indignation, said :

"You are inflicting a cowardly insult upon me, sir."

"That is going a little too far, Mademoiselle de Thalberg," said Prince Otto, bowing with a wicked smile.

When he straightened himself, his brother was in front of him.

"Am I intruding?" asked Hermann.

"Not at all. I surrender her to you," Otto said, indicating Frida with his glance as she returned to the door on the terrace.

Princess Wilhelma, sitting in the midst of her ladies and the wives of ministers and officers, had followed from a distance Otto's conversation with Frida de Thalberg. She had noticed that Hermann was also watching them with ill-concealed impatience, and when he interposed a shadow passed across the Princess Royal's calm face.

CHAPTER VII

THE immense terrace, planted with orange-trees, in which that evening yellow lanterns shone softly, overlooked the part of the royal garden which extended to the river. In front was the reflection, a bluish one in the moonlight, of the round tops of mighty trees. The boughs of the nearest chestnuts touched the marble balustrade.

Frida had taken refuge there. Resting upon the balustrade she was enjoying the coolness of the night. Prince Hermann leant by her side.

Other couples, scattered about the terrace, were indistinctly visible in the soft light of the Venetian lanterns among the old orange-trees, which were so close and tall that they formed clumps and avenues.

Hermann was silent for some moments as if he was afraid by speaking he would break a charm. At last he said to his friend :

“Well, Frida, are you contented?”

“Yes; I am happy, very happy. You will be able to do so much good! How the people will love you! and how proud I am that I belong to you!”

She looked at him. He had rested his head on his hand as if he were weary. •

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"But, sir, you seem to be sad. What is the matter?"

"The matter is, Frida, that I am beginning to become King, and that is terrible. Ah, Frida, if you knew! But I am quite sure that my desires are just. I at once set about my task, and I made use to Moellnitz of confident gestures of confidence. But I have already lost my peace of mind, and I am suffering the anguish of my responsibility. Oh, not to be obliged to discover and invent one's duty to be only one in a crowd! or else to have clear and concise instructions like the game-keeper at our little house at Orsova! Think of it! Suppose I am mistaken! You must love me more than ever, Frida."

"More than ever? How can I? I entirely belong to you, for I owe you everything. Do you remember our first meeting in Paris at the house of the Comtesse de Winden, who had picked me up, with my poor mother, almost against my will? You had come to visit the Count's picture gallery. I entered it heedlessly thinking there was no one there, and I was very much startled at seeing you in the gallery. You said: 'Who is this little girl?'"

"Are you sure, Frida, that I expressed myself so irreverently?"

"Yes, yes, I am quite sure you said: 'Who is this little girl?' I was at once reassured, for you looked so kind! The Count replied: 'She is a fellow-countrywoman of ours.' Then you questioned me and I told you the history of my life. It was a long

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story, though I was not very old then, and rather a strange one. You said from time to time: 'Poor child!' You consoled me, took me back to my great-uncle who had rooms near your own, and there I was so happy!"

"But, Frida, do you remember the evening on which I told you for the first time that I loved you? There was a ball at the Palace, just as there is to-night, and it was, as now, a masquerade of decorated men and painted women, with deceitful looks upon their faces, the deceit of devotion or of pleasure; and I myself was fulfilling my function as a Prince by uttering for hours lying words. I came here alone, to breathe the night's virgin air. I saw a white form leaning at this very spot. You were that form. To find you there with your limpid eyes and your sincere heart on the outskirts of a royal fête with all its artificiality was inexpressibly refreshing to me. It was just as if kind nature, taking pity on me, had herself given you to me."

"I remember, I remember. A nightingale was singing quite close to us. Stop, in that very tree. The night breeze, bearing to us the perfume of roses, seemed to be the breath of the earth, and although the ball was in progress behind the closed windows, it seemed as if you and I were alone beneath the vast canopy of the sky."

"Since that night I have lived a new life. I have borne my burden more cheerfully: I have had you! In the midst of this hard and artificial world, confined by absurd rites, you have been to me the spring of joy and truth.

Although I had worked hard and studied diligently before, I realized from that moment that I knew nothing, for you taught me everything."

"But I knew very little, my dear lord."

"Do not say that, dear friend. Yes, without a doubt, you were only a little girl; but you had seen the world much more clearly, from shorter range, and with more ingenuous eyes than I. You had known misery and the wretched. Your wandering life of poverty had allowed you to approach all social conditions, and upon all subjects you formed the bold judgment of a just mind. In telling me your story you revealed to me human reality. You it was who, without knowing it, suggested to me the experiments I then made to know it better. You taught me pity; at least you made it descend from my head to my heart. How can I pay my debt to you, my friend?"

He brushed with his sleeve the young girl's bare arm. Gently she withdrew it.

"Frida!" he begged.

Without speaking she drew near him, and both of them, moved to the depths of their souls by this slight hardly sensible contact, looked hastily at the stars.

But Frida raised her head with an energetic motion, as if she were shaking from her brow the soft tentacles of her dream.

"Then, sir, if I were to address a prayer to you, I should have a chance of being heard?"

"Speak, friend."

"Sir, I beg you to pardon Audotia Latanief."

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"Pardon Audotia? Do you know what she has done?"

"Yes; at the last strike demonstration she promenaded the streets with a black flag. Afterwards there was a little rioting, and the black flag was reddened with Audotia's blood. She has been in prison for three months for taking pity on those who suffer."

"Then she ought to have taken pity on the poor soldiers and the unfortunate police, who are, perhaps, sufferers as well."

Frida's slight musical voice vibrated strangely.

"Audotia pities the whole world. Only she thinks that the reign of Justice cannot be established without a little violence. Or, rather, she does not think, she goes where her heart prompts her. Perhaps she is, what people call her, mad, but she has a noble soul."

"Do you know her then?"

"I knew her in Paris, in the days of my poverty."

"You never told me so, Frida."

"I was waiting till you were all-powerful. The King would never, even had you petitioned him on her behalf, have pardoned Audotia Latanief."

"But you think I will?"

"Yes, sir, I think, I am sure you will set her free. She has been good to me: she it was who taught me to revere the memory of my grandfather who died in Siberia. I know very well that Audotia is a saint. This woman, who dreams of nothing but social upheaval, is gentleness and charity itself. I

can see her again beneath her black flag, and hear her curse the old world and announce its destruction in the slow and peaceful tones of a nun reciting her prayers. She had no relations: she was the mother of the poor, and the sister of the sick. Last of all, sir, I swear to you that Audotia is good, as you are good, and although the world of appearance has set an abyss between you two, I swear to you that in reality your views and hers are the same."

Hermann hesitated.

"I no longer doubt that Audotia Latanief is all you say she is in the eyes of God, and you know very well, Frida, that I shall take your words into account. But I have to judge actions, not souls, and I have exact duties to perform."

"You pitied yourself just now because you were obliged to find out your duties: they cannot, therefore, be so very clear, my dear Prince."

"But consider, Frida, that I cannot pardon your friend without extending the same clemency to the ringleaders of the last riots, and although there may be amongst them dreamers and dupes, there are, too, evildoers."

"Then the latter will be saved by the former. Perhaps all the wretches liberated by you will be grateful and wait for reforms to be brought about by your goodness of heart rather than try to procure them by force. The people's desire, which it is incapable of realizing alone—for it is not wise or intelligent enough for that—perhaps a sovereign might do for it. Note that this has never been at-

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tempted in entirely good faith: always the rulers who have undertaken reform have had an after-thought, and fixed limits which they would not exceed. Would it not be original, dear Prince, to do something which no ruler has up to the present dared to do, and go to the extreme limit of your charity?"

"And suppress myself?" Hermann said with a smile.

"Oh, not at once!" Frida ingenuously replied. Then dreamily, as if wrapt up in a vision of her mind, she went on:

"Afterwards . . . I do not know. . . ."

"Then the fact that I am a Prince is a matter of indifference to you, Frida?"

"No, dear friend. On the contrary, I am happy because you are all-powerful, and fill on earth the position most honoured and envied by men. But at the same time,—must I confess? . . . One thing causes me uneasiness. Suppose you were to think that I loved you because you were a Prince! Even suppose that were to be, unknown to myself, the real cause of my affection for you!"

Real, naïve anguish caused a tremor in her voice. Hermann pressed her more closely to him. She offered no opposition.

She murmured:

"No! I feel that, if I love you, it is because, even though a Prince" (she maliciously, though innocently, emphasized the word), "you are the best, the most generous, the kindest of men, and in adoring you I have the approval of every poor wretch."

"Ah, sweetheart!" Hermann sighed, "if I

could be with you, to see and listen to you always ! ”

Some of the shadows wandering upon the terrace passed not far away from them. Hermann saw that their private talk had lasted too long.

“Listen,” he said quickly, “you are supposed to have asked permission to visit your great-uncle. I shall be terribly busy for a time ; but later I shall be able, making the excuse of a journey or a hunting expedition, to pay you a few visits at our hermitage at Orsova. Each time you shall receive the warning we have agreed upon. You will start in a few days. Is that agreeable ? ”

“Yes. But Audotia ? ”

“I will pardon the rioters concerned in the last disturbance. It shall be one of the acts of grace on my joyous accession.”

“Thank you, dear Prince. From the bottom of my heart thank you ! ”

She took Hermann’s hands and kissed them passionately.

“How effusive you are, Mademoiselle de Thalberg ! ”

For a few moments, secretly uneasy at the disappearance of her husband, Princess Wilhelma, making the excuse of enjoying the fresh evening breeze, had explored the terrace, and seeing the Prince had approached with her head in the air and a look of immutable serenity on her face.

“Mademoiselle de Thalberg,” Hermann said, “believes she owes me her thanks. She has begged me to excuse her breach of

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etiquette to you. I have promised to do so."

"Her own apologies would have sufficed," Wilhelma said dryly.

"She has also begged me to ask you to grant her a few months' leave of absence in order to spend that time with her great-uncle the Marquis de Frauenlaub."

The suspicion which had begun to develop in her mind being allayed, the Princess asked in a more kindly tone:

"Was it necessary for her to address you on that subject?"

Hermann assumed a look of indifference.

"She is, as you know, timid and a little shy. Rightly or wrongly, she is less afraid of me than of you, because she has known me the longer, and she has acquired the habit of referring to me on matters of importance. Be quite easy in your mind: I have severely scolded her for her breach of etiquette. So, madam, as I am sure of her kind heart and am convinced of her repentance, I ask you to forgive her and grant her request."

"I see no objection to Mademoiselle de Thalberg's absence for a few months," the Princess said, accentuating a little the irony of her answer.

"I thank your Royal Highness," Frida said with a deep obeisance.

When she had moved away:

"You are very severe on the poor girl," the Prince said.

"And you are very indulgent."

Hermann smiled. He had been playing a

part, and just because he was not used to dissimulation he felt a novice's need for a useless prolongation of the comedy.

"Are you jealous?" he asked.

"Do not jest, Hermann. I know very well that the fact of Frida being the granddaughter of a revolutionary and the daughter of a madman is enough to make her find favour in your eyes. Even if her childish pranks amuse you I am not annoyed, for I know you. But others are not so well acquainted with you. Your long disappearance this evening presents an opportunity for objectionable comment, and I should have been more happy, I must admit, if the new King had appeared to take some slight interest in the first function in honour of his accession."

Oh, the way in which she said that! the Altenbourg manner was most pronounced. Hermann, besides, was angry with himself for lying just before and still more furious with the woman who had forced him to lie, and who had afterwards condescended to treat his little friend as a badly-brought-up child without his being able to protest against that foolish estimate of her. He went on harshly:

"I did not think, madam, that you would so soon consider it necessary to revert to our recent explanation. I desire to be the sole judge, the only judge, do you understand? of my kingly duty and of the decorum of my position."

"Oh, Hermann!" the Princess sadly replied, clasping her hands.

Her thoughts returned to her previous suspicions:

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"So the little girl has touched your heart?" Perhaps she would have given utterance to her thoughts had they not both felt around them a tremor of curiosity which had spread from the ball-room to the terrace. For at that moment an officer was approaching Hermann to hand him a very important and urgent dispatch. Hermann went back into the room set apart for royalties followed by a rustle of expectation and opened the dispatch.

The dancing had ceased. Even the orchestra was silent. A group of high functionaries and ambassadors had gathered around Hermann, and at the doors opening into the other rooms charming, though a little anxious, women's faces were grouped.

"Gentlemen," Hermann said, "the Revolution in England has taken place. The new House of Commons has proclaimed the Republic of the United States of Great Britain. Lord Sheffield has been elected Protector."

The news was not quite unexpected. Reverses in Asia, a commercial crisis at home, a revolt in Ireland, and amid these public disasters the cynical indifference of King George had detached the English people from its traditional loyalty by completing the demonstration of the inutility of its fiction of monarchy. In the midst of all this King George had been assassinated by an Irish fanatic. His heir was little Duke Edward, a vicious youth who had already been publicly disgraced. The elections were fought on the question of the Constitution. The question itself had been very much obscured by the

polemics of the Press, and on the eve of the elections it had been impossible to accurately forecast the views of the majority.

"Revolution! a republic!" There was hardly a person at the ball to whom these words had not a terrifying sound. A republic and revolution meant fighting in the streets, fusillades, massacres, the pavements red with blood, disorder and anarchy. What wonder that a feeling of pity was aroused! Exclamations arose from this aristocratic gathering: "The wretches! Poor Prince! Poor country!"

Hermann went on:

"Do not be alarmed, gentlemen. Not a drop of blood has been shed. Public opinion has upheld the decision of the House of Commons. Duke Edward has been in no danger. He has been courteously dispatched to the Continent. His Civil List has been maintained."

The effect of this was first of all stupefying, and then the feeling of anger was doubled. So this revolution had not even been stained with blood! The absence of violence was worst of all. What would happen to the world if revolutions became legal? Why had not the Duke resisted? Why had he not obliged some one to be killed on his behalf? In vague terms he was accused of weakness and, by some, of cowardice. Wearers of uniforms murmured: "We shall see!" as they dreamt of future disasters to the scandalous country where events had the effrontery to take place so peacefully.

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"Very curious, is it not?" Hermann said in an undertone, turning to the Ambassador of the French Republic. "England has invented, or almost done so, a new sort of revolution, one in which the people are polite and the Prince resigned to his fate. Henceforth a revolution will only be a contest in courtesy between the conqueror and the vanquished. The lifting of the hat will take the place of raising the gun to the shoulder. That is an excellent augury."

He attempted a somewhat nervous laugh.

The dancing was not resumed. The ball was over.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN she reached the station of Marbourg-nord, where she was supposed to take train to Birsén (the Marquis de Frauenlaub lived in the neighbourhood of that city), Frida mingled for a moment with the crowd in the waiting-hall, then descended into the station yard again, exchanged a nod with an old driver with a big grey moustache, and got into his carriage.

Night was coming on. After the carriage had crossed the dismal sooty zone of factory chimneys and waste ground, it emerged upon a large plain sprinkled with clumps of trees as the shades of evening were falling.

Then Frida remembered.

This plain recalled to her mind others far away in Courlande where she had spent her childhood. An old country-house in the midst of heather, woods and lakes came to her mind. Her mother, Countess of Thalberg, spent the days there reclining in a long chair reading French novels. Her father was almost always in St. Petersburg. Frida had since learned that he led a mad life of dissipation in that city, and that was the reason why the vast estates diminished every year through the sale of a farm or two.

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Frida, who was left to the care of the servants, lived in the fields with the peasants. They were her friends; they loved her because of her pale diaphanous beauty and her goodness.

A little orphan beggar-girl, Annouchka, two or three years her senior, had conceived an absolute passion for Frida, which was like the obedient love of a good dog for its mistress. She was thin and dirty, her eyes gleamed from amid masses of tangled hair, her feet were bare, her clothing colourless rags, and the best thing about Annouchka was a mouthful of small short teeth which she continually showed. Oh! how many enjoyable excursions Frida had taken with this ragamuffin! When the weather was too bad the little girls took refuge in the lofts. There were some old books thrown into a corner. Among them was the *Life of the Saints*, odd volumes of Gogol, and a little old book with red edges, which contained anecdotes translated from the French of the eighteenth century. The most beautiful of them began like this: "In the days when Madame de Pompadour ruled over France." Frida read aloud, while curled in a ball at her feet Annouchka listened in ecstasy.

Then Frida fell ill with small-pox, fever and delirium. The only recollection she retained of that was Annouchka at her bedside, Annouchka sitting on the floor, and Annouchka astride her little bed holding her friend's hands gently but firmly to prevent her from scratching her face. People had told Annouchka that if the patient scratched herself she would be-

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come ugly, and the little ragamuffin watched over her mistress' beauty like a gnome over a treasure.

The day that Frida began to get better (it was in May, and the sun shone upon her bed) Annouchka brought armfuls of flowers and balls. The two friends played at ball. Frida was still so weak that she often dropped the ball, but Annouchka picked it up out of the corners and from beneath the furniture with the agility of a cat; and that amused the invalid.

After her long illness Frida found herself fonder of her companion than before, and almost as simple in her ways.

Very seriously the little ones exchanged their recollections :

"Do you remember that, Annouchka?"

"Yes! yes, mademoiselle."

Another time it was Annouchka who best remembered the stories of the loft, and then Frida asked questions and listened in her turn.

"The other story, Annouchka, you know it well, where it spoke of Madame de Pompadour."

Then Annouchka would begin :

"' In the days when Madame de Pompadour reigned over France.' "

One day Annouchka did not appear. While nursing her pretty mistress she had caught her complaint. She died a few days later.

Frida wept for a long time for the humble companion who had saved her life. As at the age of nine she was a very thoughtful and uncommon child, she understood how admirable

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had been her friend's naïve sacrifice. She made promises to herself that she would always be good to the poor, to return them, by every means in her power, the kindness she had received from the ragamuffin with the noble heart. She retained an ineffaceable impression of the powers of devotion and abnegation which are often to be found in the souls of those who do not possess this world's goods. Already she used to compare the simplicity of heart of her friends the peasants (she believed all of them to be good) with the pride and stiffness of the gentlemen and ladies who came from all parts to visit her mother, and in whose presence she was ill at ease. So the memory of her friend sanctified poverty in Frida's eyes. She knew she was pretty; but she set to work to detach herself from that beauty for which another had died. From that time, she repudiated all kinds of feminine coquetry, and her strange power of seduction increased all the more.

About this time two sudden catastrophes overwhelmed the house of Thalberg.

Frida's grandfather, Prince Kariskine, being implicated in a Nihilist conspiracy—he was guilty in reality only of a sentimental complicity which stopped short of consent to the "propaganda of violence"—was sent to Siberia. Frida had often heard her mother speak of this grandfather with respect mingled with anxiety and blame, as of an excellent man engaged in secret and dangerous occupations, and as a "dreamer." She did not understand what a "dreamer" meant, but she divined that it sig-

nified some one distinguished and generous. Two or three times Prince Kariskine had come to Thalberg. Frida loved him because of his beautiful white beard and the stories he told her. Once he had taken Frida and Annouchka for a long walk with him. As Annouchka every minute or two kept kissing the hands of her pretty mistress, who, being quite used to this adoration, indolently permitted it, the grandfather said :

“Why do not you kiss your friend?”

Then Frida, with a little effort, had kissed Annouchka. About the same time that Prince Kariskine was sentenced, the ruin of the Count de Thalberg was complete: the remainder of the estates were sold. The Count left his wife and daughter fifty or sixty thousand roubles. He went to America to seek his fortune there.

The Countess bore these disasters quietly enough, protected as she was, and almost stupefied by the indolence of her nature. She took up her residence at St. Petersburg in a small suite of apartments, discovered a few not very attentive friends, and soon relapsed into her somnolent novel-reading inertia. But Frida was stifled: she regretted her open-air life and her peasant friends. Then an irresistible desire took possession of her to see her grandfather once more. All her thoughts were of him; she pictured him to herself loaded with heavy chains lying upon the straw in a black hole, like the prisoner of a story or melodrama, and the child's heart swelled with a love and pity which made her ill, terribly ill.

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She was withering away because of her desire. She insisted so strongly and so often that the Countess, less from filial affection than because of her inability to resist continual supplication, perhaps, too, seduced by the romantic nature of the journey, asked for and obtained permission to visit her father.

If she had known! Frida wished to start at once, regardless of the time of year. Oh! what a difficult, never-ending journey it was! The days, and sometimes the nights, were spent amid the gliding of noiseless sledges or the jolting of primitive vehicles across the infinite expanse of the Steppes, upon which a low and lurid sky seemed to rest! There were hours of waiting in snow-storms, danger from famished wolves, and wretched accommodation in the little black towns of wood or brick, which stretched alongside mighty rivers blocked with ice! The child appeared to feel nothing, her mind intent upon the end of the journey. But one day she fell ill on the way. She was given shelter at a lonely hut at Kirghiz. The man who lived there hunted for sables, while the woman took the products of the chase to the nearest town, about twenty miles distant, and in fine weather took three goats to feed in the depressions of the ground where a few blades of grass tried to grow. The woman was seized with sudden affection for the little stranger who had come there by chance, and whom, after she had recovered, she would never see again. She tended her with a mother's passion, while the Countess reclined upon skins in the corner of the hut

reading a story by Gabonau. This poor peasant was yet another Annouchka. When she left her, Frida kissed this kind-hearted savage!

The end of the journey was more easily accomplished, for the spring had come, a northern spring, sudden and almost brutal, which soon burnt like a summer. After a visit to the authorities in the neighbouring little town, Frida and her mother were conducted to the prison. From outside it appeared to be a high palisade of enormous pines, a square upon a bare plain. Inside were long, low wooden buildings around a vast court-yard; here and there sentinels were posted with guns on their shoulders. The visitors were taken to a wooden hut at the side of the gate. A soldier brought Prince Kariskine to them.

Frida rushed to his arms.

"Ah! grandfather! My dear grandfather!"

The prisoner just kissed the child's forehead. He was not sixty when he had entered the prison; he now appeared eighty. A year in Siberia had turned him into a human rag. His eyes were dull, and his beard yellow like that of an old beggar. While the Countess, forgetting to ask him about himself, related in an indolent voice incidents of the journey, Frida looked at the old man with painful bewilderment, gazed at his tunic and trousers of coarse stuff, half grey, half brown, and noticed that all the hair he had left was shaved on one side. A question rose to her lips which she could not suppress:

"Grandfather," she said, "you have no chains then?"

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The old man took the child's hand and made her feel beneath the legs of his trousers four thick rods joined by three rings, while in a voice low and laboured, as if he were unaccustomed to talking, he explained to her how was attached to the centre ring a strap connected at the other end with a girdle fastened round the shirt.

Suddenly Frida burst into tears. In face of the child's grief old Kariskine felt his dull eyes moisten, and in his heart, beneath the load of black despair which he believed had sealed it up for ever, the springs of tenderness re-open. He clasped the little girl to his breast and, sobbing with her, for a long time covered her with kisses.

"Ah! my dear!" the poor man groaned, "why have you come? Why have you come, little Frida?"

This scene decided the moral future of Mademoiselle de Thalberg. In the eyes of the ignorant little girl, who only knew that her grandfather was good, and who could not conceive how he could be guilty, the words "government" and "political power" signified from that time an unjust and oppressive force, which she set herself to hate with all her might. Later when she was no longer a child, she retained an instinctive prejudice against all authority and a tendency to confound in the same hatred kings, emperors or governments with the "wretches" who had made her grandfather suffer so.

A year after this journey the Countess of Thalberg lived in a melancholy little town in the

north of Prussia, whither she had been called by a friend. Frida was being educated at a school frequented by the daughters of officers and officials. There for the first time, to her great surprise, the charm which was in her, and which without any effort had won all hearts, ceased suddenly to take effect. The mistresses, rigid Protestants, distrusted their dreamy pupil who was exact in all her duties, but whom they realized had in her a secret disregard for discipline. The delicacy of her beauty and the vivacity of her intelligence excited the jealousy of her school-fellows. Perhaps these girls, somewhat dull of understanding as they were, would have forgiven her and even submitted to her grace if Frida's mind had been like their own; but the newcomer irritated them, without knowing it, by her precocious broadness of opinions, by her mockery of the "proprieties," both aristocratic and plebeian, even of those upon which they set most store. At all times she was left to herself, on account of her birth and rank, though the general antipathy she inspired did not reach to the extent of persecution.

But one day a change came. The scholars whispered together in secret; a conspiracy was organized under the direction of a strong, ruddy girl of twelve, the daughter of a judge. It was winter-time; the snow was deep. The children first of all amused themselves by building a snow fortress in the playground. Frida without suspicion took part in the affair. When it was finished, the ringleader pushed Frida roughly inside the fortress.

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"To Siberia with the Nihilist ! To Siberia !"

The child resisted. The girls, with the cowardice of a crowd, sent her rolling in the snow.

"To Siberia ! like her grandfather !"

They knew that Frida was the granddaughter of Prince Kariskine. All these little girls, the offspring of functionaries and gendarmes, urged on by a hereditary instinct and as excited as if they already were the saviours of society, pushed, hustled and pelted with snowballs the fragile child.

Frida made no further resistance. Crouching against the wall, she waited with sullen patience for the end of her punishment. She had a strange moment. With her eyes closed, her head buried in her woollen shawl, and protected by her two arms, as she stood motionless under the rain of snowballs, she thought that she was really "like her grandfather," that she was persecuted like him, because she had a different soul to the others and thoughts unknown to those who form in every country the class known as the "average individual." She was exalted into a state of melancholy pride. An insurgent was formed in her. Across the immensity of the Steppes she communed with the grandfather who suffered in the house of the dead, and from afar she sent him a great kiss of love. The Countess and her daughter left the town, and from that time forward led in Germany, Austria and Italy the life of the Cosmopolitan. Madame de Thalberg became incapable of remaining long in one place or of making a home; she even

ceased to feel the need of one. Her wandering idleness loved to travel along the roads, found pleasure in this free existence, and in a life of sleeping-cars and hotels, the ever-changing appearance of which preserved her from boredom, while at the same time she was relieved of all domestic duties and all the cares of a home.

These international wanderings had a double effect on Frida. On the one hand, the child brought up herself, developed without constraint, and remained in ignorance of the prejudice and conventions which composed the sedentary life and classification in a fixed society; she little by little gathered from the wide world and the diverse aspects of humanity incomplete and scattered notions, though they were varied and sincere: she acquired the habit of being astonished at nothing. But, on the other hand, her continual travels prevented her from forming long and serious friendships, and only permitted superficial relations with wanderers like herself; the condition of never having quite unpacked did not allow her time to give her heart either to a person or to an idea. In this way a power of unemployed love accumulated in this affectionate little girl and filled her with vague uneasiness.

This way of living had rapidly eaten up Madame de Thalberg's sixty thousand roubles. The two women had experienced difficulties arising from unpaid bills and mortgaged jewellery. The Countess displayed unalterable indifference in the face of everything. Besides, at the most desperate junctures sums of money

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came from America, sometimes, indeed, quite large ones, from the Count, who was doing well.

One day, even, he wrote to the two women that he had made sufficient money, that he proposed to return to Europe, and begged them to meet him at Marseilles.

They waited there for two months, and then *a letter told them that the Count had been suddenly ruined by a financial crash, and he would have to begin over again.*

Nice, Monaco, Monte Carlo. That was the period Frida remembered with the most bitterness. She was then sixteen. The Countess set herself to display her, for now her daughter's marriage was her last resource. Planted in the midst of the gay society which consisted of wealthy men, adventurers and courtesans, Frida viewed it from close quarters and detested the folly and hardness of those who lived a life of pleasure. She believed in good faith that this was what is called "society." Then, as she was beautiful and people suspected she was poor, she had to submit to attentions the nature of which she did not at first realize; she had to repulse ignoble offers from old men, and once even the attempts of brutal hands. That for a long while made her too disgusted to dream of love.

But the money was giving out; the Count sent no further news. Frida dragged her mother to Paris, the refuge of the wretched.

Although they only had a very small sum of money left, they took up their quarters at

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a family hotel near the Champs Elysées. Frida wasted a month in unavailing efforts to obtain occupation in teaching music, and in visiting compatriots. These were unavailing and sometimes humiliating visits, from which they only brought away wearisome promises or harsh charity. It must be admitted that when their jewels had gone and their wardrobes were sold they insensibly acquired the appearance of poor adventurers.

They then took a furnished room in a very poor house. From the first Frida was ready to endure the poverty which followed so closely after sleeping-cars and luxurious cosmopolitan hotels. She did the cooking, and looked after the dresses and the little linen which the two women had left. She was then making the most of their last money, obtained from the sale of a Commander's Star of the Order of St. Vladimir, an ancient jewel which Prince Kariskine had given to his granddaughter. So that the Countess might pass her time pleasantly, Frida had even, out of their last few coins, paid a subscription to a lending library.

But there came a day when the two women suffered from hunger. While the Countess, lying in a corner of the garret under a hairless rug, was absorbed in reading *The Mysteries of Paris*, Frida went out into the street and wandered haphazard. Passers-by addressed insulting words to her. She felt a supreme upheaval of the whole of her being against the society where a person can die by destitution without any one suspecting or car-

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ing and where she knew that, had her pride allowed it, she could not, being beautiful, stretch out her hand without being insulted. *Beneath her hatred rose a sort of mystic joy* at feeling herself to be the unknown sister of so many other victims, at the thought that her own distress increased the atrocious debt of the old world, and would without a doubt contribute to the hastening of the work of a hidden Justice which waited, but forgot nothing and settled all accounts. These strange ideas ran confusedly through her mind. She remembered many things : the German children who had snowballed her, the martyrdom of her grandfather, and the famines among the peasantry of which she had heard tell in her childhood. Believing herself near death, her drooping heart sank into an immense sea of pity for the countless assembly of sufferers of all centuries and from all lands.

Her strength failed her. With faltering steps and throbbing temples she returned to the house.

On the staircase she met a woman in black, who stood aside to let her pass.

The woman was ugly, but had an expression of kindness which made her face very lovable. She was like one of those old and common nuns of uncertain age, whose eyes and whole appearance express certitude and charity.

Frida climbed the stairs painfully, clinging to the banister as she went. The woman in black looked at her for a moment; in three steps, man-like strides, she reached her side

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and put quickly into her hand a big silver coin, while she whispered in a powerful and gentle voice :

"Please do ! Please do !"

She descended the stairs again without giving the young girl time to reply.

The woman was Audotia Latanief. As she was mixed up in the affair eight years before which had gained Prince Kariskine his deportation to Siberia, she had taken refuge in Paris, where she worked "for the cause." She resided in the same house as Frida, occupying two little rooms furnished in the commonest fashion, the walls of which were piled round with pamphlets and newspapers.

On the following day Frida, after making inquiries, went to thank her benefactor. She told her story. Audotia, in spite of her cosmopolitan life, could not hear without emotion that Frida was a fellow countrywoman, and when she found out the name of her grandfather, she kissed her in motherly fashion.

"My child," the old revolutionary said, "I will speak to the Duchess about you."

The restless and theatrical Duchess of Montcernay, whose generous fantasies were the talk of Paris, was a new friend of Audotia's. Very much superior in sentiment to a life of luxury, she had not been able for long to content herself with it. She had begun in commonplace fashion by encouraging the arts, and had herself painted mediocre pictures and written inferior verses ; then she had bravely sacrificed a few millions of francs over vague enterprises in sentimental politics and evangelical democracy.

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At last she rushed into philanthropy, building orphan homes and houses of rest as costly in their management and appointments as a nobleman's racing stable, and each inmate of them represented a cost of five thousand francs a year. But she satisfied her need for emotion every morning by visiting in person, leaving her carriage at the door, the dwellings of the poor, and it was by the bedside of a workman's wife that Audotia had met her.

"She is my friend," said Audotia. "She does not entirely accept the truth. But she has good intentions."

Either through the protection of the Duchess, or through the efforts of Audotia, who out of doors led an active and mysterious life and had friends in all classes of society, Frida at last earned enough to live upon by giving a few lessons in German and music. She knew her way, and tramped from one end of Paris to the other. She was more than resigned; she was proud of working, and more and more all the impressions which came to her from without became transformed in her into movements of charity and compassion. Among the crowds she saw on the 'busses and trams many poor faces gave her much food for thought; she divined much from the inspection of their features and manners, and reconstituted their lives of humble labour and sacrifice, so that, moved by her own imagination, she dissolved in sympathy for the poor strangers she met. As, too, in her encounters in the street or public conveyances, every one was on occasion good and obliging to her because

of her grace and pretty face, she was surprised to find people so kind.

At the same time she was taken with a passionate affection for Audotia. On her part Audotia, seeing her so ingenuous, so brave and fragrantly beautiful, set herself to adore her. There was in this love something maternal and respectful, like the sentiment the High Priest experienced for the young King Joash, or the feeling of an old monk for a young novice of whom he expects great things, and it seemed as if the old Socialist had little by little conceived the idea of fashioning Frida for great things.

One morning the papers announced the death of Prince Kariskine. A few days later Audotia said to her young friend :

“Come with me this evening.”

She took her to a public meeting held to discuss the measures to be taken for the celebration of the approaching anniversary, the 18th March. But the real object of the meeting was to utter and hear hopeful and violent words, the speeches of the dreamers and the terrorists.

Audotia spoke. With the eloquence of a preacher, and a monotonous and chanting diction which an internal flame gradually excited, she delivered something like a funeral oration on their comrade Kariskine. She told of his life and the sacrifices he had made for the cause; she described his sufferings in prison. “Now what was his crime, comrades?” She enumerated his virtues: she told of his humanity, simplicity and childlike

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gentleness; she narrated anecdotes of him, and suddenly went on:

"I call upon his granddaughter, here present, to support my statements." All eyes turned towards Frida, who was sitting near the platform on one of the lateral benches. Dressed entirely in black, crowned with her flaming red hair, and her mouth half open displaying her little teeth, she had on her beautiful face the light of profound emotions. Tears flowed from her eyes, but she did not know whether she was weeping with sorrow at the thought of her grandfather or with joy at feeling herself loved by all these hearts at once.

Audotia took her to other meetings; not certainly to those at which she anticipated quarrels and too fierce explosions of foolishness or ferocity, but only to gatherings which were a little like religious ceremonies, as they were arranged for the purpose of honouring martyrs or celebrating anniversaries. Besides, the vagueness of Audotia's doctrines permitted her to belong equally well to every revolutionary party, and they all invited her to their assemblies, because hers was to all of them the voice that led in curses and blessings, in exaltation and excitement. She observed the festivals of their saints, solemnized the memories of their martyrs, and was at the same time officiating priestess and prophetess of all parties.

Frida took pleasure in these meetings. At first the vulgarity of several of her new brothers, the smell, their black hands and their

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dubious beards had put her delicacy to a very severe test. But she felt ashamed of her repugnance as of a low common sentiment; she forced herself to love the wretched as they actually were. This effort was supported by candid and boundless optimism, and by the precious gift of only seeing and recognizing evil and ugliness when there was no means of doing anything else. If by chance she discovered in spite of herself that there were among her comrades evil brutes, she thought: "It is not their fault, they are so unfortunate!" But she was not very often exposed to such cruel discoveries. For her grace acted without her knowing it, even upon the most vulgar and stupid: they restrained themselves in her presence, they showed her great respect because of her grandfather the martyr; she was *popular at the clubs*; she was the *charming little maiden of the revolutionaries*, and she innocently enjoyed her glory.

The revolutionary parties therefore appeared to her like an idyllic assembly of brothers. She believed more each day in the goodness of the poor. Of the theories propounded at the clubs she only retained those portions which could serve as nourishment for her credulous generosity. She was not troubled by the contradictions of the doctrines of collectivism, possibilism, communism and even anarchy; she only realized the points they had in common: their dream of a fraternal and just society. This moral chimera contained in her mind, was the most seductive thing to her in the city of the future. Because Frida was capable

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on her part of the virtues which alone might have made this Utopia possible, she believed it to be actually realizable. Socialism, a dream of brutal egoism to most of her comrades, was to her a dream of sacrifice.

Another attraction to her was the religious feeling created by the socialistic faith in the minds of those who are not evil. Socialism is indeed a faith. Frida was completely insensible to its objections. In what way would those things, of which she dreamed, come to pass? She did not know; but they must come. The wisest said: "It is the law of evolution," just as in other religions people say: "*It is the will of God.*" The disposition of soul of the good communist is not perhaps very far removed from that of the early Christians, when they were waiting for an earthly city of God and believed in His early Advent, although the Roman world assuredly opposed as many obstacles to their dream as our own world can to the dreams of the revolutionaries.

Beyond faith and hope, Frida discovered a cult. The ceremonies of the public meetings, with homilies, memories of their saints, celebration of the days of bloodshed or victory, were her masses and vespers. This girl without fatherland, and till that time without religion (at an early age she had renounced the belief and practices of the orthodox Russian Church), in this way found in the dream of Socialism, a complete religion, able to satisfy all the requirements of her imagination and her heart. She was the more exalted in her faith because this revolutionary Church of which

she was a part lived half in mystery and had the appearance of a persecuted Church, or at least one outcast from ordinary society, and kept without its bounds, which had therefore become somewhat subterranean and conspiratory.

It was at this moment that the Duchess offered to Frida the position of lady companion to the Countess de Winden, whose husband was legal adviser to the Embassy of Alfania.

Frida at first, in spite of her mother's entreaties, refused the offer. Madame de Thalberg had not disapproved of her new ideas. Though *passive and indolent*, the woman had become *vaguely revolutionary herself through hatred* of her poverty, just in the same way that she would have remained a Conservative, an orthodox Christian and faithful adherent of the Czar if she had continued to pass her empty days at her estate at Courlande. But that was also the reason she did not understand how Frida could miss the opportunity of emerging from the middle-class existence they had been leading and re-entering society.

Audotia intervened:

"Accept," she said to Frida. "You owe it to your mother." Frida agreed. She had only been with the Countess de Winden for a week when Prince Hermann met her there. •

A Royal Prince. The heir-apparent to an absolute monarchy! He could only inspire in Frida feelings of distrust and aversion. Yet two months later Frida and her mother had returned to Alfania and been reconciled to her great-uncle the Marquis de Frauenlaub, who,

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since Prince Kariskine's affair, had disowned them. Madame de Thalberg resided with the old gentleman, only to die shortly afterwards with no other regret than because she had not finished her last novel, and* Frida was introduced into the Court as maid of honour to Princess Wilhelma.

How had all this come about?

Frida had believed herself obliged to refuse Hermann's offer. She took counsel of Audotia. But her old friend, after questioning her about the Prince, had said :

"Go. You must. Perhaps we shall meet again some day. Do not write to me : that is useless."

Frida had heard no tidings of Audotia till the day she had come secretly to Marbourg to spread the truth and had been arrested at a riot of strikers. Now she understood this silence, and the reason the old woman, when they parted, had entrusted her with no mission, and had not even given her any advice. What supreme cleverness ! Merely by loving the Prince, merely by showing herself to him as she was, by laying bare to him bit by bit her heart and mind during the talks which the slight mystery and rarity of their meetings made more significant and more precious to both of them, Frida exercised a very gentle and powerful influence over Hermann. In this indefinite, loving though perfectly chaste liaison the speculative intelligence of the philosopher Prince had allowed itself slowly to be invaded and penetrated by the intrepid sentimentality of his little friend. He was almost prepared to be-

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lieve that she was more far-seeing in her enthusiastic candour than politicians and economists, and he was already disposed to admit that the best solution of the eternal social problems was still, perhaps, confiding goodness, audacious charity, and appeal to the hearts of those interested, however foolish such an experiment might seem.

Now while the carriage traversed the wood, and the light of its lamps lit up ~~the trees~~ as it passed, Frida thought that a solemn hour had come, that she possessed the soul of the man who held in his hand the fate of a nation, that the people were going to be happy through her, and that all the adventures of her life had prepared and fashioned her, as through a marvellous predestination, for this sublime and secret rôle.

The carriage passed by the side of a grey wall masked by undergrowth, and then stopped at a gate. A girl in a camisole opened it and said to the old coachman :

“Good-evening, grandfather.”

The carriage entered, passed through the gate and along a curved drive to set down the traveller at the door of a fair-sized house with a low roof which was surrounded by a terrace with a stone balustrade.

“Have you had a pleasant journey, madame?” the girl asked.

“Yes, thank you, Kate. Is my room ready?”

“Yes, madam.”

Frida opened her window. The clumps of trees in the park and the motionless tops

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of the distant forest seemed to be sleeping beneath the milky sky. The only sound was the rustle of leaves, or the noise made by some prowling animal. Frida's thoughts became religious amid this silence and serenity. Her heart swelled with infinite hope.

CHAPTER IX

THE following paragraph appeared in the *Figaro* and *Gaulois* on the 10th of September, 1900 :

"There was a meet yesterday at Montclairin, Baron Issachar's place. His Royal Highness Prince Otto of Alfania led the field. The Duchess de Beaugency was the recipient of the brush. In the evening the Baron's guests sat down to a magnificent dinner in the Primatico Gallery. Among the notabilities present were the Marquis de Baule, the Baron and Baroness Onan, Count and Countess de Messas, Viscount de Mizian, the Duke and Duchess de Villorceau and M. Dubois."

Generally paragraphs like this cost Issachar, all told, two or three hundred thousand francs ; say about fifty thousand francs for the cost of the entertainment and about forty thousand francs an evening representing Prince Otto's winnings at cards. Now the Prince for years had been accustomed to spend a week at Montclairin, so friendly was he with the Baron.

Till that time Issachar had not found it too expensive to be publicly the friend of a Prince, —a real Prince and the possible heir to an ancient crown was worth some sacrifice. He

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had not a paltry soul, this little tenacious Jew with illimitable ambition, whose worst tricks had only been the secret servants of an immense pride, knew how to pay royally for his royal friendships. Thirty years before he began life as the agent of a woman famous for her economy, Bertha de Chatou. He afterwards married the retired proprietress of a family hotel, who was a little over-ripe but well-endowed. Ah! what good use he had made of this money! He disappeared for ten years. He was operating somewhere in Asia Minor, where he brought off a formidable coup in foreign railways, and then reappeared with fifty millions of francs. He was said to have quintupled them by his investments. He was very charitable provided that publicity was assured, and an enlightened and generous patron of literature and the arts. But in particular this Jew was eaten up with love for the throne and the altar. His supreme idea was to be in "society" and move in the most aristocratic circles.

Still he was not greedy. Except at rare moments of inadvertence, when his national characteristics unwittingly appeared, he did not love money for itself, but for what it represented, for the power of which it was the sign and instrument. He was not lacking in probity. He had, in order to build up his enormous fortunes, fooled and despoiled a multitude of people, but at a distance and by indirect methods, without being brought into direct contact with their ruin or their tears. Even in the days of his misery he would never have

consented, even had the opportunity presented itself, to appropriate another man's purse, for that would have been ill-gotten money, because it was obtained from a person off his guard, and was being a sufficient return for work, energy or patience. But banking and trading was a battle, not theft. All the gold he had accumulated was the price of his activity, of his boldness as a speculator, of his imagination as a business man, and of his intellectual superiority. Without doubt to grasp and bring to a successful issue business in this way, is to proclaim by a roundabout way the right of the strongest or the most wily; it is an admission that the pursuit of wealth, in spite of appearances, takes place under similar conditions to those under which men hunted their prey in the stone age. But this consideration had not occurred to Baron Issachar. He considered that the morality of the conquerors was good enough for him, and that the nobility of plunder was in proportion to its results, to the risks run in its acquisition, and the use made of it by the plunderers.

Now he considered he was making glorious use of his vast wealth. He consecrated a part of it to the fusion, which was already well advanced, of the aristocracy of wealth with the aristocracy by birth; he had the glory of providing with pocket-money a Prince of one of the oldest European monarchies.

But all the same he ended by discovering that this glory cost him dearly, and that the benefit of this princely friendship was too purely "moral." He calculated that besides

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the money he allowed him to win at the card-table, he had in eight or ten years advanced to the Prince nearly twelve million francs. In return for these services, when in the previous year he had discreetly expressed a desire to obtain the concession for the copper-mines recently discovered in Alfania, he only obtained an ambiguous and embarrassed answer from his Royal Highness. Was he taken for a dupe? Really a disinterestedness too nearly approaching foolishness was expected of him, and he did not wish, for the sake of his honour, to be thought capable of it. In a little while a feeling of bitterness took possession of him.

Now on the very morning he was expecting the arrival of the Prince at Montclairin, he found amongst his correspondence a letter from the manager of the Eastern Railway Company and another from Viscountess Moreno, accompanied by two bills.

Oh! they were a mere nothing! The railway company demanded the payment of five thousand francs for the special saloon which had been placed at the disposal of Otto on his recent journey to France. The bill had first of all been sent to the Prince, who had simply replied that "it concerned Baron Issachar."

The Viscountess Moreno, a great lady famous for her gallantry, had gone from Marbourg to Paris a month before with Otto, and had occupied, as befitted a Prince's beautiful mistress, the finest suite of rooms at the Hotel Continental. A week later Otto started for London after giving the Viscountess a piece of jewellery worth about £25, but without settling

the hotel bill. In short, he had left her in poverty and embarrassment. An appeal, which she had addressed to him, had remained without response. In her distress she had recourse to her old friend the Baron. A bill for three thousand francs accompanied the letter.

Issachar paid the two bills. But when Otto arrived at Montclairin in the best of spirits, the Baron received him with an excess of respect and reserve which boded ill to all those who knew the man. He did not take with his royal guest those slight familiarities in which he had been formerly so proud to indulge, which, besides, the Prince's frankness and familiarity seemed to invite. The more ceremonious deference he affected, the more hostile became the coldness of his eyes and his expressionless face.

On the first evening at baccarat, when he had the bank, the Baron did an unheard-of thing: he played as if he desired to win. He nevertheless first lost twelve thousand francs. For the first time signs of impatience escaped him; he uttered complaints which astonished the other players, and to which the Prince replied by ponderous jokes. Then the luck changed. By two o'clock in the morning the Prince owed two thousand pounds.

The other players did not understand and began to be uneasy. They all played with Otto, and one of the attractions at Montclairin was that they all counted, more or less, on the benefits of this association. One of them was the Duke de Beaugency, an old *roué* with an empty head, a snub nose and a

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fan-shaped white beard. For fifty years he had led a life of pleasure mechanically, just as a clerk goes to his office, and he posed, no one knew the reason of this caprice of Parisian foolishness, as the leader of the smart set and arbiter of the fashions; he was always penniless, in bad odour with all the usurers, and reduced to practise what might be called family swindling, the purchase of horses, pictures, wine or jewels, which he sold at once for a quarter of their cost, sure that the Countess would in the end pay, as he knew she was afraid of scandal, and would never have the courage to take refuge behind the legal disability of her mournful husband. The Marquis de Baule was there, too, and he, being married to the daughter of Baron Onan, had not been able to escape from the trammels of a dowry, and received his pocket-money from his wife with such exactness that the baccarat at Montclairin was a very welcome windfall to him. Desraviers was another of them, a big fair fellow of the cavalry officer type, a sportsman without any known resources who in society made a speciality of questions of honour.

"I win two thousand pounds," said Prince Otto.

That restored their confidence, and they all went for a big stake. Without a doubt Issachar had only consented to win out of pique. He knew his duty. He was a fine fellow, incapable of violating the tacit undertaking which gathered them round the card-table. Surely he was going to "return" the money.

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The Baron dealt the cards. Prince Otto smiled an inscrutable smile.

Issachar won again.

They were all stupefied. What had happened between the Baron and his guest? The Duke, Desraviers and the Marquis cast an evil glance at the Prince, whose face was quite contorted with anger.

"Shall we go on?" asked the Baron.

The Prince rudely declined.

The three others having taken their leave with discreet rapidity :

"Ah well, what do you think of it?" the Prince said, trying to contain himself. "What terrible luck. It is all the more unfortunate, too, my dear Baron, as I must confess——"

"Sir," Issachar gently interrupted him, "I beg your Royal Highness will not worry over such a trifling matter. My lawyer will arrange about the four thousand pounds you have lost this evening, and also about these two bills, one of five thousand francs and the other of three thousand, which I have had the pleasure of paying the Eastern Railway Company and the Continental Hotel. Altogether that makes eighty-eight thousand francs."

He took the bills from his pocket-book and continued :

"I am not mentioning the twelve million francs which I have had the honour to advance to your Highness in nine loans for which I have here the acknowledgments."

"You are very business-like."

"It goes without saying that, for the last sum, I am prepared to grant your Highness

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reasonable delay, and the time of payment shall be arranged to suit your convenience."

Issachar's tone expressed boundless respect.

"Why not the bailiffs at once?" the Prince sneered.

"I assure you, sir, that I have never spoken more seriously in my life."

"You know very well, my dear friend, that I have no money."

"Your Highness is joking?"

"Not in the least!"

"We are both of us quite serious then. I prefer it that way."

The Prince was pale with rage. All the same, with a familiar movement he put his hand upon the Baron's shoulder.

"Come! let me know what you really mean! Tell me quickly!"

"But, sir, I have already told you."

"That mining concession, are you referring to?"

"But you can do nothing in it!"

The Prince was silent. The candles in their high candlesticks were almost burnt out, and their lengthened flames looked pale in the increasing daylight. The pallid light lit up the Baron's baldness, as he obstinately avoided the eyes of his questioner. Issachar put out a smoking candle and then suddenly asked:

"What is the Blue Eagle, sir?"

"Are you very anxious to know?"

"Simply out of curiosity."

"It is the most ancient order in Alfania. It is reserved for gentlemen who can show thirty

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quarterings, and in exceptional circumstances it is bestowed upon victorious generals, great *savants*, and men who have rendered their country some remarkable service, a service which does not enrich its author. The Blue Eagle? It is better than the Golden Fleece. I warn you, my dear Baron, that it is still more difficult to obtain than a mining or railway concession."

"One does not prevent the other," Issachar said.

Otto bit his moustache. Contemptuous and vengeful phrases rose to his lips, such as: "You want war, Monsieur Issachar? Very well! You are claiming this money, which is of little consequence to you and is stolen wealth! You are treating me as a debtor! I therefore have the right to treat you as an usurer, like the miserable Jew you are. You are yourself re-establishing the gap between us which I had the kindness to bridge. As there is no longer a Ghetto, and our imbecile laws consider you as a kind of man, your money shall be returned to you, but accompanied by the supreme contempt which your cringing roguery deserves. The Blue Eagle? You mean a good kicking!" But he dare not utter them: he realized that the Baron had made up his mind. He felt that he was in the net; he bowed, almost choked with anger, before the power of gold!

"So," he said briefly, "these are your conditions?"

Issachar with a deprecating gesture replied:

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"Oh! your Highness uses such strange words!"

The Prince then rose:

"At what time is the first train to Paris?"

"Nine o'clock this morning. The carriage shall be ready. Does your Highness return to Marburg?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"My solicitor will be at Marbourg in a fortnight, and I feel sure that your Royal Highness and myself will end by understanding one another and that your Highness will return me his valued friendship. Permit me to go and give instructions for your departure."

The Baron smiled with the most suave deference.

Otto watched him go; then with a livid face he shook his clenched fists at the door and shouted: "Vile scoundrel!" two or three times with all his might.

CHAPTER X

"YOUR cousin Renaud is mad," King Christian had said to Hermann. No! Prince Renaud was not mad, but only a young man well endowed with sensibility and imagination, who did at all times just what he pleased, and whose conduct was determined by reasons into which the old King could not conveniently enter.

Renaud's mother, a breath, a soul, with a transparent face like a picture from an old missal, had died in giving him birth. Then his father had gone, too, after three years of languid despair and mystic love for his departed wife, with towards the end of the time some dabbling in occult sciences. The orphan spent an idle and neglected childhood, and pursued haphazard capricious and incomplete studies. In that way he had realized and absorbed certain parts of history, poetry or the dream of the past, not the simplest but the most sumptuous and stormy; as, for example: *Rome in the Days of Heliogabalus*, *The Byzantium of Theodora*, *Alexandria on Gnostic Heresies and Nervous Maladies*, and in general all the writers of the Decadence. He loved all these things, not from an acquired corruption

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of the mind, but because of a hereditary disposition of his sensibility. This child was born for chimæræ.

At eighteen he resolved to live as he chose. As it was not probable that Renaud would ever be called upon to wear the crown the King his uncle soon ceased to trouble about him and direct him. The young Prince was, too, obstinate, in a gentle way, with an obstinacy against which no authority could prevail.

His first intention was to be a poet and artist. At once he rushed in the most natural way in the world into the extreme extravagances of the most modern schools, which, as a rule, consisted of a master and sometimes only one disciple. For several years all the symbolist youths, the decadents and instrumentalists, all the pseudo-primitives, the pseudo-mystics, all the inventors of new thrills and unusual prosodies, the occultists, and also the musicians to whom Wagner is only a forerunner, and who orchestrate: "I have some good tobacco," with the sounds of the strand and the forest; and also æsthetic painters, the painters of blue and yellow, those who draw very badly long souls encircled with little folds and holding lilies in their soul-hands, and likewise the luminists, those who see landscapes like the wrong side of a tapestry and who, under the pretext that everything in the world of colour is but an exchange of reflection, paint thighs mauve and breasts the colour of sulphur, all the giddy-headed or all the tricksters in literature and art, all those who desired

something, but were not quite sure what it was, had a convert set at Prince Renaud's table and drew upon his open purse. He gave in his palace strange and childish spectacles, in which bad actors in white robes with violet powder on their hair, were crucified for the love of Satan, who was also Jesus, and choirs sang esoteric hymns before Theodora the inquirer, who dreamed with eyes fixed on the amethyst scorpion lying between her breasts. Prince Renaud walked about the town usually escorted by badly built young men with long hair, who, beneath their æsthetic appearance, concealed the acumen of lawyers, the vanity of tenors, the intolerance of imbeciles, and sometimes the aspirations of people who are perverts.

The Prince himself was perfectly sincere and innocent. His credulity where new forms of poesy and art were concerned, came of ignorance, of somewhat morbid nervosity and of spontaneous inquietude. Ancient forms offended him by their excess of precision and because they seemed to him not proper for the expression of all he felt to be hidden in life. He exaggerated this mystery, and did not take into account that it is purely subjective, personal to each of us, fugitive and changing; that the perception of this marvellous something corresponds to the inferior moment of artistic production and that it of necessity disappears in the execution stage, since it is unutterable, but that it reappears once the form is fixed, even from that very form; that it is the arrested and intelligible

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expression which contains and suggests to us most "the beyond," and that it is the poems or works of art, the most precise when they are truly beautiful, which become in our minds the most mysterious and fertile in dreams.

People looked upon Prince Renaud as a maniac. But because he was very gentle and did no harm to any one his eccentricities were in the end overlooked. Soon his actions ceased to excite astonishment; he had won the right to be extravagant: no one paid any attention to him, and although he was a Prince of royal blood, he was allowed to live as he pleased.

He had suppressed from his mode of living all kinds of ceremonial and display. He never appeared at Court. He set to work in good faith to forget his rank, not at first from philosophic indifference, but from artistic scruples and vanity. For he had published little books and daubed pictures, which were vaguely æsthetic and darkly sensuous, and his great and ever present dread was that his works should be praised because of the name of their author rather than for their merit. This idea made him redouble, in his relations with painters and literary men, his false familiarity and studied intimacy.

In the end cads abused his frankness. Renaud then saw that most of his comrades had exploited him shamelessly and realized that they were humbugging him. Suddenly he closed his doors to them.

He imagined at the same time that he had been duped in yet another fashion. He gave

up, either from weariness and satiety, or because of this proof of the charlatanism of those who had surrounded him, his futile efforts in art and poetry; he realized the deceit and foolishness of it all. He had a revelation of simplicity one day when,* on an excursion to the Island of Cyprus, he thought it the correct thing to bring away with him a copy of the *Odyssey*. But shortly afterwards he considered Homer tainted with artifice. Literature, even in its primitive period, appeared to him as the most foolish of illusions: was he not foolish to spend his life in making vain representations of life?

His regained simplicity expressed itself by a new kind of apparent eccentricity. He made the discovery that man's first duty was to exercise his body in order to increase its beauty. He resolved to devote himself to all kinds of sport, and principally to the events of the circus. He frequented the society of clowns and gymnasts and made friends of some of them. But as his limbs were so slow of movement and clumsy that he could only attain some proficiency in juggling he was about to desist from this caprice as he had others, when he met in a circus at Marbourg, the little equilibrist Lollia Tosti.

She was an amber brunette, with long legs, a small throat, a bulging forehead, a naïve and serious mouth, and had her thighs and bust enveloped in folds of an old red silk. She raised herself high up above the ring, on a slight trapeze where, without touching the cords, she slowly balanced. Then upon the

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narrow moving rod, she balanced a large gilded ball and upon that, without any support, she stood upright; she poised there on one foot in the attitude of a goddess cleaving space with a planet for her pedestal. From that position she threw her childish kisses to the audience. At last, having tried and achieved the impossible, as if the law of gravitation, braved by this audacious child, were suddenly taking its revenge and as if a jealous Nemesis was punishing her because, she, a mortal, had tried to transform herself into the ethereal body of a goddess, with a long parabolic dive like an Icarus struck by a thunderbolt, she fell into the net.

Renaud suddenly conceived a violent affection for the delightful gymnast, and although he believed himself for ever disgusted with the arts of writing and drawing, he adored her principally because she recalled to him one of the figures of Botticelli's "Spring" and resembled the one of the circle of three women with fingers interlaced, who showed her delicate back and her ingenuous and pensive profile.

He came to see her several times. He waited in the passage when she left the arena. Her angelic serenity ravished him.

One evening in the circus stables he had himself introduced by a friend of his, a clown, to Lollia's parents.

They were a fat man and fat woman who wore an air of extreme honesty. The fat man gave his card to the Prince, who read these words on it :

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ANTONIO TOSTI,
Ex-artist Gymnast and Clown ;
Father
of the Illustrious Aerial Equilibrist
The

SIGNORINA LOLLIA TOSTI.

At that moment the ring-master came to say that the net was being prepared for Lollia's performance.

The young girl approached her mother and kissed her with the words :

"Good-bye, mamma."

She crossed herself before she entered the ring.

"A habit of hers from childhood," Madame Tosti informed the Prince.

Renaud questioned the good lady, who told him that Lollia was very pious. Her dressing-room was full of religious pictures. The bouquets which were thrown to her she was in the habit of taking to a chapel of the Holy Virgin.

"She is modest, too, sir."

For the rest, it was a necessity of her profession. The work of other acrobats might allow of some infringements in the rules of continence. But Lollia's work was more exacting. The aerial equilibrist must avoid not only fatness, which displaces the centre of gravity, but stiffness of the joints, the sun upon the nape of the neck, and secret sorrows.

Renaud was content to listen to this and think that his friend's art must be the most mystic of arts, since it was only a patient

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victory over matter, and through it a woman's body was almost transformed into that "glorious body" of which theologians spoke. It pleased him, too, that the miracle of the acrobatic art, just as the miracle of holiness, had as its first condition absolute chastity, and that the force which raised from earth Thérèse d'Avila or the sister Marie Alacoque, was also that which supported in the air Lollia's adorable form.

He cherished the young acrobat's innocence. Several times he ate macaroni with the family of Monsieur and Madame Tosti. His talks with Lollia were of a childishness which charmed him. She knew nothing and had no mind. She was a little girl who loved God and her kind parents, and that was all. She told what she had seen during her travels through the old and the new world, and she had seen nothing but matters connected with the circus.

She lived for her art alone. The greater part of the days were taken up with her work, for her performance required constant training. The feeling of her acrobatic excellence gave her immense pride. Her destiny seemed the most beautiful of all. She felt herself to be a living poem. She despised comedians whose business was to amuse people by pretending to be what they were not; she also despised the clowns who disfigured themselves and talked nonsense. Renaud gathered from her talk that she considered herself the equal of Princesses and Empresses. Renaud thought that a very sensible idea.

He rejoiced that he saw her so perfectly naïve and so peculiar, so strangely exceptional. He persuaded himself that in loving her he was returning to nature, and he "simplified" himself, according to the advice of Tolstoi, of whom he had recently become an admirer and whose gospel he curiously adapted to what remained of his æsthetic mania. As he could not think of making Lollia his mistress, and did not wish to do so, since he loved her rightly for her purity, he resolved to marry her. He told himself that it would be a good and eminently reasonable action, quite worthy of a free man and a child of God, and would only appear blamable to the narrow and worldly minded.

For a long time, in hatred of artifice and from extreme cunning, he avoided in his talk anything which could resemble, even remotely, intricate phrases, and his zeal for simplification was such that he set himself only to say things which could be understood by little children or the most ignorant woman in the world. He had never made love to Lollia, fearing to accidentally drop into a phraseology which he despised, and thinking that his feelings towards the young girl were quite unutterable.

One evening when he was alone with her in the tiny dining-room at her home (her mother was in the kitchen and her father was out), Prince Renaud simply said :

"Lollia, I love you."

The little goddess showed no surprise, but seemed very pleased.

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Renaud added :

"Do you love me? "

She replied :

"Yes, sir."

"Do you love me because I am a Prince? "

"Yes, for that reason as well."

"But if I were not, would you love me just the same? "

"Yes, sir."

She gave these two answers without hesitation, and he saw that they were both equally sincere.

He continued :

"Will you marry me? "

"I will, sir."

She said it without astonishment, but with a slight effort. He noticed it :

"Does the thought trouble you? "

She said "no," but admitted that at the same time it would be a severe wrench to give up at once her art, which she knew was incompatible with the state of marriage. She begged him to allow her six months to complete a tour which had been arranged for her in Alfania. Afterwards she would return to Marbourg and then they could be married.

Renaud agreed to everything. It seemed exquisite to him that she made the conditions.

He, kissed the little goddess respectfully and she bashfully gave him a maiden's kiss in return.

"Be particularly careful," he told her, "not to say anything to your parents till your return."

When she came back Renaud recognized

joyfully that the test of absence had left their love intact. It was arranged between them that Lollia should appear at the circus for the last time. She was marvellous in her daring, and attained, in her struggle against gravity, the extreme limits of the possible. Her dive into the net had in it the tragedy of a love suicide, of an irrevocable fall into some abyss.

On her return to the dressing-room the little acrobat wept for a long time.

"Do you regret?" said the Prince.

"No, sir, as I love you."

Smiling through her tears :

"Did I do well, sir? I would have liked to-day to have gone through my performance better than usual, in order to have all the more to sacrifice for you."

CHAPTER XI

PRINCE HERMANN was seriously labouring for the welfare of his subjects.

Without reckoning the ills common to the other European countries, Alfania suffered from an uncasiness the principal cause of which was the unsuitability of her political institutions and her new social and industrial state.

Alone with Russia Alfania had remained an absolute monarchy. Her ministers were only the officers of the executive power. The King wielded the legislative power with the aid of three great bodies, the members of which were nominated by him—the Chancery, the Council of the Realm, and the Senate.

Through force of circumstances these three bodies were composed almost entirely of nobles, descendants of the great county families, manufacturers and financiers. Now the prodigious development of native industries had in forty years created a considerable working-class population. Therefore these people found themselves exclusively governed by men whose interests were diametrically opposed to their own. Even if they had possessed all the virtues (which they did not) this aristocracy of wealth would have

been looked upon with more suspicion by the proletariat than an aristocracy of birth and would have appeared more unbearable. Revolt against real injustice increased the workers' apprehensions of injustice indefinitely possible and the feeling of the essential absurdity of such a political organization for an industrial country.

Hermann was of the same opinion as the working-class, who were supported by the small shop-keepers and part of the rural population. Unfortunately he was a despotic monarch in name only, and he could not govern contrary to the three bodies who were incensed at his orders, nor could he change their way of thinking, nor communicate to them the ardour of abnegation with which he was devoured. One remedy only presented itself: the establishment of a representative *régime*.

But as Hermann was powerless to force the instruments of his absolutism against their will, so was he also unable to destroy their power at a blow. In our own times and lands the real autocrat only exists in theory. Without a doubt even the absence of a constitution seemed to allow Hermann the right to give a constitution direct to his people, and absolute power apparently implied, for the man who withheld it, the liberty of renouncing it and decreeing its suppression or limitation. But Hermann felt that was forbidden him, and realized that all he could attempt was the employment in his plans of the three original bodies by momentarily increasing their powers.

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He therefore combined the members of the three assemblies into a sort of advisory committee with a few men well known for the liberality of their ideas, lawyers, journalists and solicitors, and submitted to this committee a scheme for a Parliamentary Constitution, comprising a Senate nominated by the sovereign and a House of Representatives elected by a very large number of the people, the franchise to be only eight or ten florins.

In order that the people should not doubt his sincerity, he chose as Prime Minister Athanase Hellborn, a very popular lawyer and the director of the leading opposition journal, and entrusted him with the task of defending the project before the committee.

In his first interview with Hermann Athanase Hellborn adopted an excellent attitude. He nobly thanked the Prince for his confidence, imposed his conditions, displayed some hesitation in accepting the principle of the franchise, and swore that through his efforts all would be well. He was sympathetic and cordial, and wore the happy look of a man who enjoys life upon his strong face. Hermann decided that he was a good fellow, but one who talked a great deal and whose private life left something to be desired.

The new minister at first displayed admirable energy. He succeeded in carrying by a small majority the scheme as a whole.

Then came the period of the amendments.

One day Hellborn declared to the Prince that after mature reflection he had come to the conclusion that the franchise had been fixed much

too low in the original scheme. He proposed to raise it to twenty-five florins. He spoke no less of justice, liberty and equality. But Hermann gained the impression, that these words on which the lawyer had lived, and to which he owed his fame and fortune, were pronounced by him without realizing their import, perhaps even without understanding them, and that his political creed was the same to him as are many people's religious creeds. The discovery of this hypocrisy, which was quite as vile and more fatal than any other, was very painful to him.

Another time Hellborn explained to the Prince that there was a risk of losing everything by trying to gain too much, that great changes did not come about all at once; last of all, that in his opinion a third of the members of the House of Representatives should be nominated by the King. In the course of the interview he assumed an air of superiority, said with a smile that some injustice was inevitable, that one must look after oneself, that the people was a child incapable of self-government, that promises were sufficient to amuse them, and besides, "the present state of affairs will last as long as we shall." From that day Hermann felt a horror of his minister, profoundly scandalized at hearing him treat, with such lightness questions to which he, the Prince, had given his whole soul. So from day to day Hellborn gave way before the committee, and accepted amendment after amendment till there was hardly anything left of the original project he was there to father. He, too, ex-

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panded with satisfaction at his new position, led a life of pleasure, attended supper-parties, and had for a mistress a famous comedienne.

It was the old story, and a very commonplace one.

The beginning of the democratic counsel's conversion had been the handshakes in the lobbies, the good grace and almost camaraderie of the gentlemen leaders of the Conservatives whom he never would have believed were such good fellows. He had, as I have mentioned, displayed considerable energy at first; the Conservative party felt that they were lost, and feared, if they resisted the measure, the dissolution of the assembly, and the direct grant of a charter by Prince Hermann.

Then it was that Hellborn received an invitation from the Countess de Moellnitz, one of the smartest and cleverest women among the aristocracy of Marbourg.

She had said to her husband: "Leave it to me." Moellnitz did so to the end.

Hellborn became one of the frequenters of the Count's house. He felt unutterable joy in rubbing shoulders with all the aristocracy of the kingdom. He called the Count his "dear friend."

One evening, when he was conversing with the Countess and sitting close, in fact very close indeed, to her in the little drawing-room which she generally used, he saw in the mirror Moellnitz enter the large drawing-room, walk across it, then hesitate a moment and go out again with a careless air.

He was convinced that the Count had not

seen them. To suspect him of complaisance would have been too absurd. Moellnitz was a perfectly honourable man of proved valour.

On the other hand, it was quite true that the Count de Moellnitz firmly believed that the safety of the realm hinged upon the preservation of the old institutions, and that, in order to defeat the designs of the Prince and his minister, he was ready to make any sacrifice. Had he seen anything in that mirror? Was he ignorant of his wife's liaison with Hellborn, or was he aware of it and, by a heroic sacrifice which made his heart bleed, was he sacrificing his honour as a husband for his duty as a true Royalist? No one will ever know. The soul of a courtier, who is convinced, can be sublime after his own fashion.

At least, if Moellnitz was making this sacrifice, it was not in vain. The law passed by the assembly created a Senate formed of all the members of the old bodies and a House of Representatives, only two-thirds of whom were to be elected under an excessively restricted franchise of forty florins.

The people thought they were being played with. Fresh strikes took place. The working classes announced for the 1st of October a great demonstration in favour of universal suffrage, so that elections of members to the new House should solely hinge upon this question.

CHAPTER XII

"I FEEL that it is my duty, Monsieur le Ministre, to acquaint you with my intentions. I have authorized this advertised demonstration. The route will be fixed in advance so as to interfere with traffic as little as possible and then at a few points for three or four hours only. That can be easily arranged. Within these limits full liberty will be allowed to the people to publicly express their desires, on the condition that no seditious cries are uttered."

"Will the 'cry of 'Universal suffrage for ever!' be considered seditious?" Hellborn asked.

"No," the Prince replied.

"Will your Royal Highness permit the demonstrators to carry the black flag through the streets?"

"No, I cannot allow the black flag. That would give a revolutionary character to the demonstration. If the workers hoist the black flag they will be arrested by the police. In other respects, I repeat, they have full liberty. Are we fully in agreement?"

Hellborn assumed a serious expression.

"I regret I must admit to your Royal Highness that I am not so confident. For the first time ten or twelve thousand workers are to

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unite. They will perceive their strength. They will be very excited. More than half the people are supporting them. Audotia Latanief will be at their head, and you know her authority over a crowd. That woman is incorrigible: she is a revolutionary maniac. She has badly recompensed your Royal Highness for his generosity."

"I did not pardon Audotia with the idea that she would be grateful."

"Even was there no one to whisper revolution in their ears, if they have a free field, they will become intoxicated with their own numbers if nothing else, and disorder will arise from the excited mob."

"The surest way of provoking disorder is to prohibit the demonstration."

"The most certain way of defeating the disorder is to anticipate it. That is the way we always used to be treated."

"We?"

"Yes, sir! since the word escaped me there is no reason for me to conceal the fact that I took part in several disturbances in my youth. The King, your father, had us arrested before we had begun. That method was always successful."

"Then, according to your ideas, it would be necessary to——?"

"To prevent the demonstrators from combining, and afterwards drive them hither and thither in groups."

"Do you think they would allow it?"

"I don't think so. There would probably be a few broken heads."

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"Probably?"

"Certainly, if you prefer it. But if you do not do that you will be obliged to break a great many more a little later on."

"Perhaps it will not be necessary to break any at all. You must admit that would be much preferable. Why should not the demonstration conclude in a peaceful way? The great majority of these people are not evilly disposed. If they are allowed to shout their fill, that will relieve their feelings and divert them from evil doing. Why not?"

"It is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because it has never happened."

"It has never happened, because it has never been allowed to happen. Listen, my dear Hellborn: what the people have resolved to do, does not appear to me to be altogether illegal. I held out great hopes to them. They have been deceived, but not through my fault, you know. I am still disgusted by the egoism, duplicity and cowardice of which the last assembly gave me such a fine example. The workers, whom the hope of political reform had rendered patient and who had relied upon it, those in particular, who for that reason alone had consented not to prolong the strikes, see that they have been duped. The strikes have recommenced: I am neither astonished nor annoyed at that. The disappointed workers now demand universal suffrage. I do not say that they should have it granted to them at once, for I know the danger and misrepresentation involved in such a course. Yet when

the divine right of Kings is no longer believed in, universal suffrage perhaps remains as the last possible source of authority: a troublesome source but the only one. Last of all, if the people are demanding too much, it is because they have received too little. I am the King of all my subjects, rich or poor. The right of peaceful remonstrance, by the latter to the former, is the principle I am supporting and mean to defend."

Hermann spoke calmly with ordinary inflections. The more he realized the strangeness of his words, coming as they did from a Prince's lips, the more he forced himself to utter them in a tone of the utmost simplicity and quiet certainty.

"Sir," Hellborn said, "I have the honour to tender to your Royal Highness my resignation."

Hermann got up.

"Very well. It is extraordinary what trouble I have to retain my ministers. It must be because I do things which are too simple for them."

He began to pace up and down, with lowered head and hands behind his back.

"I have learned a great deal in the last few months. The reason which renders the iniquities of the political and social position so difficult to remedy is to be found in the circumstance that every one is both judge and prisoner. My remarks are in no way original, are they? The removal of these iniquities is demanded by those who suffer from them and part of those who profit by them. Now the

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former demand and hope for too much, while the latter can never be really sincere. There will always be in the best of them an abyss between their thoughts and their actions. Almost all the revolutionary theorists belong to the lower classes, though a few spring from the wealthy middle class. If they all brought their conduct into agreement with their doctrine, if they lived soberly, if they consecrated all their superfluous wealth to the relief of the misery with which they profess to be pained, the social question would already have made a huge stride towards its solution. But it is not so. Being privileged they continue to jealously enjoy their privileges. We see in every country that most of the leaders of the democracy are either very economical citizens, or men of pleasure, that they do not love the people, but find even their proximity unpleasant, and only foregather with them at their clubs and at election times; they do not perform charitable actions even under the pretext that such good deeds are not charity, but the reform of institutions which will lead to the extinction of misery. Hypocrisy! Hypocrisy! Alas! they would only need to give the tithe of their income. But even among the rich and the least callous, who gives a tithe?"

Halting in front of Hellborn he went on:

"I accept your resignation, sir. I expected it, and you are quite right to tender it. Your conduct in the discussion of the reforms has compromised you with your friends of the old opposition, without quite taking you into the Conservative camp. But you, without a doubt,

feel that it will be easier for you to become reconciled to the latter and give them your support in safeguarding society. I give you my permission to tell them that it was I who would not allow you to safeguard it."

Hellborn, in nowise embarrassed, smiled a smile of superiority.

"Your Royal Highness just now gave expression to the most noble thoughts. But what would you have, sir? Before making certain sacrifices, at least we should like to be sure they would be efficacious. Does your Highness permit me to speak freely? If perhaps we, the privileged, hesitate—the privileged middle class, as you call us,—to sacrifice our privileges, are you yourself, sir, sure, absolutely certain, that you would consent, if the occasion arose, to sacrifice your own? I do not speak of absolute power, for that is to-day but a name; you have already renounced that."

"Do you mean the crown?" Hermann asked. He then resumed gravely, reflectively:

"In my soul and conscience, Monsieur Hellborn, I have parted with everything, even the crown."

Changing his tone he went on:

"But do not repeat that. Still, you would not be believed."

Hellborn withdrew somewhat abashed.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM the day his father had abdicated in his favour Hermann, beyond his indispensable relations with his ministers and a few politicians, had lived in profound solitude. For that reason he was not distracted from his dream, and he amassed in himself, by the continuity of his effort and meditation, a reserve of energy equal to the boldness of his plan. Three or four times only he had secretly passed a few hours with Frida at the house of the woods. He had remained apart from Wilhelma; on the usual dates he visited the Princess's chamber: but it was quite useless for her to question him, to tell him of her distrust and anxiety, for he inexorably refused to discuss public affairs.

He had reduced the ceremonial at the Palace to the lowest possible point, suppressed receptions and functions, and given to the public charities of Marbourg the five hundred thousand florins saved in this way.

At first this liberality had increased his popularity. But he had not maintained it, for he never showed himself to his people from a feeling of shame, because he considered the pursuit of ovations as unworthy of a wise man, and because these acclamations, of which he

was beforehand quite sure, seemed to him out of proportion to the little merit he discerned in himself.

This absence had chilled the people, who could not understand its cause. At the time the assembly of the three bodies was mutilating, clause by clause, the scheme for a constitution, the leaders of the people accused the Prince of being a secret accomplice of the actors in this comedy. When it was discovered that he tolerated the demonstration, people were found to say that it was a trap for the people.

Hermann knew all that. He had foreseen it. He resigned himself to their foolishness and inevitable ingratitude.

Besides the distrust of a part of the crowd, Hermann felt against himself the opposition of all the privileged middle class noiselessly growing, and becoming as uncontrollable as egoism and the instinct of preservation and ownership.

He still went his own way. Nothing could make him draw back. Formerly he had obtained the reputation of being weak and unfit for action, either because of his excess of sensitiveness or because of his critical mind. At that time he had no obligation to others, and his lack of decision was of little consequence. But now that his sentiments must be translated into decisions which had public consequences, he had acquired a will. A tense and rigid will it was, the solitary and uninterrupted effort of which had brought about in him, little by little, that disposition of soul in which the

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mere thought of the necessity of overcoming an obstacle sufficed to make the perception of the obstacle disappear and resulted in the performance of foolish or sublime actions. In short, Hermann lived in a state of moral somnambulism.

Moreover, his lucidity of mind remaining perfect, he himself fixed the conditions under which the popular demonstration could take place. The demonstrators were to meet in the Place des Maronniers, traverse the quays on the right bank of the river to the Place des Trois Rois, take the line of the great boulevards, and disperse in the Square de la Croix-Bheu. All along the route he fixed the positions to be occupied by the troops at buildings like the Barracks, the Bank, and the Royal Library, in the courtyards and basements of which reserves of cavalry and infantry were held in readiness to instantly emerge. He took care that all these preparations for the use of force should be concealed. He set himself the task of foreseeing everything and giving the most precise instructions. At points at considerable intervals where the procession became seditious, three times the crowd were to be ordered to disperse. If these commands were unheeded the cavalry were to advance very slowly. But whatever the circumstances might be, the cavalry were only to draw swords and the infantry to fire on Hermann's express orders. His study was connected by telephone with the quarters of the Governor General of Marbourg, situated at the other extremity of the Palace, and with all the troops held in

readiness. By this arrangement, whatever happened, only a minute or two could elapse between the arrival of the news and the transmission of the Prince's orders. In this way he would have supreme command, as he wished to take the entire responsibility. Old General de Kersten, the Governor of Marbourg, an old soldier to whom orders were the only consideration, agreed to everything without reflection, or else with the thought that the Prince was a fellow full of queer ideas, but that he must have his own way as he was the Prince, though if the worst came to the worst he would recognize sooner or later the necessity of returning to the traditional practices of government and police.

CHAPTER XIV

A WARM, almost summer-like sun shone on the morning of the 1st of October. There was not a cloud in the sky: it was useless to reckon on rain, so fatal to street demonstrations, and so powerful an aid to authority in days of disturbance. The demonstrators had the sky in their favour. Hermann rejoiced: the experiment he was trying would in this way be all the more decisive.

He was alone in his study. An orderly officer was at the telephone in an adjacent room. The first news seemed reassuring. More than ten thousand workmen had assembled in the Place des Maronniers in an orderly manner, with hardly any shouting. Slowly in serried ranks the enormous procession began to move.

The Palace was wrapped in silence. Not a sound arose from the boulevards or the still deserted quays. Hermann experienced a feeling of uneasiness. He thought of the mighty sound of the breaking sea, which without a doubt the crowd made in the streets, and which every second was drawing nearer, though it was not yet audible. The silence oppressed him like the calm before a storm. He paced

the room nervously with long strides: Sometimes his eyes met the black, fixed gaze of the picture of Hermann II. It seemed to him that an ironical and contemptuous smile was playing about the lips of his terrible ancestor. Then he looked him in the face. No, the illustrious butcher was not smiling. With hostile attention the Prince examined the sad, stern mouth, the forehead strangely narrow at the temples, and the teeth like those of a carnivorous animal, of the picture. He felt pride and pleasure at the thought that what he was doing would be hateful and unintelligible to his sinister ancestor, could he but lift up the flags of the chapel of the Carmelites where he had lain for five hundred years. He told himself he was the first to dare to break a tradition of so many centuries, and though a son of Kings, to give the lie, in the name of human kindness, to the pitiless and false wisdom of a whole race of Kings.

Then he sat down, took from his pocket a letter, unfolded it, and read the last page with the air of a devotee meditating on a sacred text.

"Yes, I am thinking of you, not more than on other days, but with greater anguish. I know too well the terrible counsels of prudence the politicians will give you; but you will not listen to them? There are perhaps among all these poor people a few who are evilly disposed and many who are ignorant; but there are many unfortunate ones as well. Do not be afraid of them, as you are their friend. Prevent them from being provoked by a display of prepara-

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tions for repression before it is known whether there will be any need of such measures, and I swear to you that they will do no harm. The soul of the crowd is generous to him who treats it well. Fetter it by the confidence you show in it. Think, my dear Lord, if one alone of Jesus' poor, of those who are good and suffer unjustly, were to be killed by you, their natural protector, and that because they cried out in their misery! No, I cannot bear such a thought. In the name of our love do not shed the blood of these unhappy folk."

"Ah! Frida! little Frida! That is my *viaticum*," Hermann murmured.

He recovered his composure and confidence, as if an infinitely sweet certainty from those innocent, loving words had taken possession of him.

CHAPTER XV

"MIGHT I say a word?"

Otto entered, visibly agitated. But his sneering smile hovered about his lips.

"The time," Hermann said, "is perhaps not very well chosen."

"That is because you cannot be seen at all times. Besides, I am going to tell you, I have no choice of time. Whether I do so to-day or some other day, it is all one to me. You are not doing much to reassure the peaceful. I know your ideas. You think that a mob of 12,000 or 15,000 will take their gentle stroll, and as long as there is nothing to thwart them they will remain peaceful. I have very grave doubts about such being the case."

"We shall see."

"It is very simple. One of two things will happen: either your view is the right one (that is possible) and everything will pass off quietly; or you are mistaken, and then you will do as others have done before you: you will defend yourself,—only it will be just a little later. There will be a little more destruction than if you had done so at first, but it will come to the same thing in the end. We shall have the last word, this time again and on a few other occasions,

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because now we are the stronger; I say we because I include our good nobility, and our delightful middle class. Evidently it is not to be for long; but the machine will last as long as we shall. I don't ask for anything more myself."

"Noble heart!"

"I am not a sentimentalist. But let us talk of my business. I mentioned it to you a few days ago."

"That mining concession?"

"Yes. Baron Issachar would pay well for it."

"That means?"

"Good God! it is clear enough."

"What! would he offer me money?"

"I did not say that. You need know nothing about it. In everything there is a way. But times are hard. Even crowned heads run short of pocket-money. I do not think that Wilhelma herself would be annoyed at a subscription to her good works; besides, three million francs is worth having."

"It is useless for you to continue, you know."

"Why?"

"Don't you understand?"

"No."

"That is quite right: you cannot understand," said Hermann, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Otto's forehead wrinkled, and an evil look came into his eyes.

"Come, Hermann, is it not a serious matter? What have you against the Baron?"

"I have nothing against him. I will not do it, that is all. I find that the owners of the land have a right of ownership, and as they offer guarantees——"

"Less than the Baron. In Alfania he owns 60,000 hectares of forest land. We owe the tramways of Marbourg to him."

"That means he owes them to us. Unfortunately, speaking for myself, I think that he has plenty of other ways of investing his twenty millions, and that it is not the right time, when the social question has reached an acute stage, to grant privileges to those who are already too rich. My reasons are clear, as you see."

"I could answer you with several good arguments. But I should be wasting my time to-day, for you are set against the idea. We will talk of it again. Only listen: you are putting me in a false position with the Baron. I led him to hope. In any case, it seems to me that we owe him some compensation."

"Compensation for what?"

"For all your refusal will cause him to lose."

"What does my refusal make him lose?"

"Good gracious! what he asked you."

"You are a logician!"

"Last of all, I am somewhat involved with Issachar. Even if it were only to help me out of my embarrassment it seems to me you might do something to help him to wait, and especially something which would prove to him that I look after his interests. Consider that the Baron is a powerful person, and that it would be bad policy to offend him. Besides,

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a mere trifle would delight him, a simple mark of esteem which would not cost you a half-penny."

"What mark of esteem?"

Otto answered in a careless way :

"Well, the Order of the Blue Eagle, for instance."

"The Order of the Blue Eagle for Baron Issachar? What are his titles?"

"But his money."

"Is that all?"

"What do you want? Do you again refuse?"

"Ah yes! I most certainly do!"

"You are not very amiable. I thought you were more so. Well, what have you against me?"

"Do you want to know?"

"Yes, very much."

"Ah well, the thought of being your accomplice in this affair gives me a feeling of horror. Shall I tell you why you come to beg for poor Baron Issachar? It is because this Jew has you by the throat, you, the second Prince of the royal blood; you owe him more than twelve million francs, and he considers the time has come to be paid; even this morning you received a visit from his solicitor, who brought you his final demand. The ungrateful fellow does not remember he has been your dear friend; he forgets that in return for the honour you did him by being his guest you were satisfied with a modest win of two thousand pounds each evening at baccarat. Yes, it was all ruled out like a music-paper. It was your payment

for travelling, and you only travelled for this remuneration. He finds now that it is too expensive, especially when the small sums you deigned to borrow from him come to be added. He finds that the honour of your friendship is not worth its cost, and he considers he has had the worst of the deal. He puts you in the position of having to pay him, in one way or another. Ah! you are a fine Prince! Your poor wife, who all this time has lived like a recluse, crushed beneath a weight of shame and sorrow, sobbed the other day when she was speaking of you to me. You have so madly and brutally abused her in every way that now you are in search of fresh sensations of the sort which land private individuals in prison. You began by descending to dirty skirts, girls of the streets or servants, and you disguised yourself for your pot-house adventures. Then even that did not satisfy you. One of the duties of the police is to protect you. No, I will not pay your Jew the cost of your vices. Royalty is not robbery!"

These phrases struck Otto like blows. He was livid, his insolent smile left his face for a moment, and his lips trembled a little. But he restrained himself.

"What would you have? When one is bored! If you only knew how weary I get! I warn you, too, that your remarks are very much exaggerated. But as you know everything, and even a little more than that, help me out of it! You understand that the reason I have spoken to you is because I cannot help myself. What do you want me to become?"

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"Clear yourself. Sell an estate. The Château de Grotenbach is your own private property."

"Loaded with mortgages, poor Hermann."

"Become the intimate friend of some other banker."

"Then you will do nothing for me? Notice how patient I am. After all I am your brother, and if that gives you certain rights, such as saying disagreeable things to me, it also creates, it seems to me, certain duties."

"Ah! what does the fact that you are my brother mean? Just as if that signified anything. Have we ever loved one another? Have we ever even known one another? Besides, do I know that you hate me?"

"I."

At that moment a great confused sound came from outside. It was doubtless the late-comers going to the meeting-place of the demonstration. The two Princes listened; the shouts became distinctly audible.

"Do you hear what these people are shouting?" Hermann asked.

"No."

"They are shouting 'Long live Prince Otto!'"

"Well, that is because I am a member of the true faith."

From the moment he decided that nothing was to be obtained from his brother, Otto resumed his natural attitude, and swinging his great body with his hands buried in his pockets:

"What can I do? It is not a seditious cry."

If I were the elder and you the younger they would shout: 'Long live Prince Hermann!' It is clear as daylight."

"Do you know who has paid them?"

"It certainly is not I: I am not wealthy enough."

"It is you! You also had the city placarded with bills which I had torn down this morning, in which I was denounced to the people as playing a double game—liberal in my public declarations, but secretly the friend of reaction. Do not deny it. I have proof."

"What proof? The reports of detectives anxious to advertise their own zeal? You tell me that to rid yourself of the necessity of rendering me the little service I asked. You are wrong, Hermann; I assure you such is the case."

"Listen," Hermann said.

It was the telephone bell in the next room. Two or three minutes elapsed; the two Princes were silent. The orderly office entered and seeing Otto appeared to hesitate.

"You can speak," Hermann said.

The man repeated in the uniform and impersonal tone of an officer making a report the communication he had just received:

"The demonstration started about half-past ten. There are about twelve thousand men, and a few hundred women and children. At first it was very quiet. But suddenly at the corner of the Quai Saint-Pierre and La Rue des Tanneurs, Audotia Latanief unfurled the black flag."

"That woman again!" Hermann murmured.

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Otto's face brightened up.

The officer went on :

"The flag was taken from her. A few blows were exchanged, but nothing serious occurred. Audotia resisted, and was taken in charge with three or four rioters. The crowd went on its way, peaceful in appearance and almost in silence. The Governor General of Marbourg thinks that this silence is not a good omen. He says it would be possible, without much trouble, to divide and force back the demonstrators when they emerge into the square near the Saint Gabriel Bridge. What are your Royal Highness's commands?"

"The same. Let them go on."

The officer withdrew.

But Hermann was not now so easy in his mind. That woman Audotia again! This holy woman was becoming singularly obnoxious. It is true that the incident was anticipated, and without a doubt it would have no consequences. Why then was Hermann, who was so full of confidence but a short time before, now seized with anxiety?

He turned his back on his brother; but he still had the feeling that Otto, with his big nose, sunken eyes and evil sneer, was behind him.

"What have you to smile at?"

"I am thinking," Otto said, "that you will fail: you will end, willy-nilly, where you ought to have begun. Go on, I shall yet have the exquisite pleasure of seeing you fire upon these good people in whom you have such confidence and whom you love so much."

“Your remarks are abominable ! ”

“In what way? I am stating facts. Whom do you hope to deceive? The sentiments you parade are contradictory to your function. If you really felt them, or if you were capable of following them out to the end, there would be only one thing for you to do : go away. Now you will not go. You will stay to defend us—with shots if necessary—and you will massacre the poor devils, among whom there will certainly be brave fellows, because you will not be able to do otherwise. The sight of you floundering amid these contradictions will be the first vengeance of a man who does not manufacture phrases nor take pride in justice and pity—myself. Then I shall wait. I am talking to you very quietly, as is my habit. But you said just now things which I do not allow any man to say to me, not even you. I warn you I shall remember.”

“Very well,” Hermann said, “I can see that you are indeed my brother.”

CHAPTER XVI

PRINCESS WILHELMA rushed into the King's study holding little Wilhelm by the hand, followed by the little Prince's governess.

"Hermann! Hermann!" she cried, "do you know what has been done to your son?"

Her air was tragic; even her beautiful curls were slightly disarranged. But at all times she retained her grand air, the Altenbourg manner. That was the reason that Hermann, after looking to see that the child was unhurt, asked quietly:

"What is it? What has happened?"

"The rioters threw stones at your son's carriage, and he might have been killed but for the speed of the horses. I think that is something to reflect upon."

"But," the Prince said, "he has not been injured. Nor has his governess. Perhaps Madame de Schlicfen has exaggerated the incident a little."

He questioned the governess. She had started that morning to take Wilhelm to the King, his grandfather. But meeting the crowds going to the demonstration, the old

lady, overcome with fear, had ordered the coachman to return to the Palace. Some of the workmen recognized the royal livery, uttered threatening shouts and threw stones at the carriage. It was a miracle that neither she nor the little Prince were struck.

"If, madam, you had continued your drive," Hermann coldly said, "nothing of the sort would have happened."

He was convinced that Madame de Schiefen had dreamed almost all she had narrated. He examined her ridiculously majestic appearance. He told himself that the people had been provoked by her head, and since the child was safe and sound and all that had happened was a little disturbance, he inclined towards indulgence, the imprudence and folly of which he realized in a confused sort of way. But his inclination was stronger than he was; the sight of this dowager had always the effect of awakening in the depths of the Prince's soul some unconquerable revolutionary instinct, almost of the bludgeon and barricade order.

But the old woman's story had excited little Wilhelm :

"Papa," he said, "they are wretches. They must all be killed, all ! all !"

The child trembled with fear and anger. Hermann looked at him with an air of unutterable sadness, and answered gently :

"But, my dear, if you want them to be killed, you are as wicked as they are !"

The angry abortion began to sob. Hermann

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kissed and caressed him without speaking : the tender words he sought did not rise to his lips.

The Princess signed to the governess to take the child away.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN she was alone with the Prince, Wilhelma said :

"Then it is quite right ! You have authorized the demonstration."

He saw she had made up her mind to speak, and that he could not this time avoid an explanation.

"My word is pledged," he replied. "Even did I wish to withdraw my permission it is too late."

"There would still be time if you wished."

"Very well, then, I will not do so."

"But do you know that you are destroying yourself? "

"I have already been told so ; but nothing is less certain. My opinion is that the demonstrators will return peacefully to their homes after making their desires known, as they have a right to do."

"A right? Do you not see that even if, impossible though it seems, they do not to-day commit any violence, this pretended right of public remonstrance will be the negation of your own power, the royal prerogative which is their best safeguard."

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"Words! They suffer: I am giving them the liberty of complaining."

"A complaint which issues from thousands of mouths as their owners promenade the streets is not a complaint, but a menace. They suffer? Well, do you think theirs is the only suffering? We, too, suffer. Especially it would be so if you were to desert your post. Think of that; think of all those who are behind you: your nobility, your army, all those brave fellows who would lay down their lives at a word from you, and who belong to you and have put their trust in you. If the riot breaks out and meets, through your fault, with but uncertain and tardy resistance, think to what you, their master and defender, deliver all those in your charge."

"I am the defender of the others as well," Hermann replied. "Am I King only to mount guard over the privileges and strong-rooms of the satisfied? For it seems as if, in these days, a sovereign is but a gendarme in the service of the land-owners! I do not accept that *rôle*. You call upon me as a King! Very well, I am reverting to the primitive function of royalty, the protection of the humble and weak. I want to be with those who suffer the most. Most of what they demand is just; I am sure of it; I have studied the question. You do not know what the lives of some of the poor are. How should you have any idea? You have only viewed them from a distance! I know, I have tried to see or picture them to myself. On that account, I tell you, even the brutalities of the populace cause me less horror than the

hypocritical injustice and the hardness of some of the wealthy and great nobility. The latter, in reality, seem greater strangers to me and less my brothers than the children of the people. Even to-day, do you know whence comes all the evil? It arises from the fact that the rich have not the courage to be less rich. There is, at the root of it all, nothing else. That is the obstacle to everything, the insurmountable obstacle. It is that which fills me with anger!"

"So be it!" Wilhelma ironically said. "There is nothing but pride and hardness in the rich, virtue and disinterestedness in the poor. I will not therefore speak to you of the devotion of most of your gentlemen nor of the traditions of honour and heroism of our aristocratic families, nor will I again repeat that some of the rich perhaps are good fellows. I admit the egoism of the fortunate. Do you think it wise to still further exasperate it by making them afraid? Do you consider that the best means of converting them to the spirit of sacrifice is to allow to pass beneath their windows, out of a tolerance which is almost complicity, the brutal menace of a revolution? You complain of being imperfectly understood and badly seconded by them. But at least speak to them; do not display to them that wounding distrust; and if you want them to make this effort to work with you, even though it is against themselves, do not refuse to remain with them."

"Alas!" Hermann said, "they know too well that I will remain from taste or of necessity, and they understand that I am their

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prisoner. The truth is that I have tried in vain to be one of the last of the absolute monarchs in Europe, but I have no direct control over those of my subjects who hold nine-tenths of the wealth of the kingdom. Their calculation is atrocious, you see! If this movement degenerates into a revolt, they know very well that it will be necessary to repress it after all, and that the terror which will follow this repression will re-establish for some time order and silence."

The Prince's words sounded bitter. Wilhelma felt not that his convictions were wavering, but that his ideas were escaping her. Her husband's thoughts had semblances of generosity which, while they did not persuade, disconcerted the Princess. Being a woman she could only hold her own by sentimental arguments; now such arguments superabounded in favour of Hermann's thesis, whereas Wilhelma was reduced to the necessity of speaking almost entirely of experience and reason.

"Yes, for some time only, perhaps. For those you have to defend are the vanquished of to-morrow. At least do not aid in their defeat."

An argument had occurred to her. She recovered her spirit:

"Think what would happen afterwards. Can you picture it without terror? Then defend your power, even in the interest of your dream, for surely the blind and stupid mob will not be able to bring your dream to pass?"

"Blind and stupid?" Hermann said. "That is what people always say. For that reason I want the demonstrators to remain calm to the end; and so that they have all the credit, and afterwards all the benefit of doing so, I want to leave them free, even to the last possible moment. The revolutionaries pretend that repression makes riots. I want to see if it is true, that is all."

"But you are playing a *mád* part! You are risking something which does not belong to you alone! Royal power is a patrimony of which each King is only the trustee and which he ought to transmit intact. If the interest of the better part of your people, and if your own danger influence you so little, think of your son! Do not sacrifice his crown!"

"No one can say at this moment whether I am sacrificing it or ensuring it to him. I am trying an experiment. I desire to see if these people, whom I love, and who ought to know it, are capable of aiding me by being content, or if they are only the violent brutes you fear. The good which will come of this experiment, if it succeeds, is certainly worth a few risks. A new state of things creates new and more adventurous duties, and puts us in the position of hazarding more than was formerly necessary. To-day a sovereign must risk much to save everything."

Here the Prince appeared to hesitate at his own thoughts; then, in undecided tones though in a somewhat febrile and provoking fashion, he went on:

"And, if it is necessary to foresee the im-

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probable, when I risk even the future crown of this little child——”

“Do not finish, Hermann! It cannot be you yourself who are talking like this. What I refuse to believe must then be true? I dare to say that this folly springs from yourself alone, that you are not subject to some influence, and that your own thoughts are all that separate you and me!”

“What do you mean by that?” Hermann said in a broken voice. “Ah! madam, if I am mistaken, leave to me at least the responsibility of my error! I am strong enough to bear it alone. If I were a man to submit to the will of another, obviously I should already have yielded to yours, for, thank God! I did not believe that a woman could put so much fury in a demand for what? blood! The fact of being an Archduchess does not go so far as that!”

“Hermann!” she said sorrowfully, “why do you impose this odious *rôle* upon me? Do you think that I too have no pity, and that my heart does not bleed at speaking to you as I do? Yes, it is a thankless and difficult task to recall the things I have had the courage to bring back to your mind; but it is the most evident, most pressing and most imperious of your duties. But I say you will not escape, and it will seize you when you awaken from your dreams. You are not free, you recognized that fact just now with anger. Something more powerful than yourself: your birth and your rank weigh upon you, you are born on this side of the battlefield; so much the worse for

you! When you would like to be a deserter, the other camp would not accept you. If everything gives way beneath our feet, let us fall on guard at our post. Thirty generations of Kings compel you."

"Less than my conscience, madam."

The officer appeared at the door.

"What news?" Hermann asked.

"A communication from the Governor General: The number of the demonstrators is still increasing. There is no disorder up to the present time. But the General observes that it will be easy to cut the procession in two at the Carrefour des Tanneurs. He asks if your Royal Highness has nothing to modify in the orders you have given."

"Absolutely nothing."

"But——" Wilhelma began.

"I have given my orders."

"The procession," the officer went on, "must pass the end of the main avenue in the royal garden. Your Highness could easily see it from the windows of the throne-room."

"I have thought of that. Thank you. You can retire, Captain."

Turning towards the Princess he said:

"Madam, you often take pleasure in recalling to my mind my power and prerogative. Now if I am King, I am King to you. If I am King by divine right, it is obviously God who is inspiring me with the conduct with which you are scandalized. What answer have you to make?"

"None, Hermann, except to say that I shall go to watch over the safety of your son and

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return to take my place near you, come what may."

"Ah ! madam, I can assure you nothing will happen."

"May God listen to your prayers ! "

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM the windows of the throne-room a vast avenue five hundred metres in length stretched to the iron gate which enclosed the King's private garden. Hermann remained for some time watching the crowd pass this gate. It marched without disorder in irregular ranks and it seemed to be passing almost in silence.

Hermann took a glass. He could watch through the bars of the gate the continuous procession of faces, almost all of them ugly, some fierce; others suffering and weary, but most of them without expression, while he could see the open mouths of some, though their shouts were not audible. He thought:

"Ah well! I was not mistaken. How sober they are, poor people! There is hardly any signs of a riot."

He felt a longing to thank them for proving that he was right. But bit by bit even the order and silence caused a feeling of uneasiness in his mind. Better than a confused and excited mob would have done this seemingly mute procession—which passed in a never-ending stream—produced the sensation of number and strength. Hermann began to be astonished that he had dared to set at liberty,

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even for a few hours, this unknown force, and the anxiety of waiting became intolerable to him.

Suddenly he saw that the procession of the poor had ceased to pass onward. It was retracing its steps; the serried mass wavered and seemed to hurl itself against the railings.

Almost at the same moment the officer announced that the demonstrators were clamouring to be allowed to enter the royal garden.

Hermann hesitated for a moment.

"What!" he said to himself, "how cowardly it would be!"

Then an instantaneous and irresistible desire came to him to see from closer range this dark mob.

"Open the gates for them!" he ordered.

He resumed his position at the window, protected from outside eyes by the balustrade of the large balcony and the half-drawn curtains.

Soon through the open gate the crowd poured in, spreading out as it advanced. The faces in the front rank became more distinct. Hermann could see evil and bestial countenances.

"Evidently," he thought, "it is not the idea of justice which enflames them. They are without a doubt as hard, as greedy, and though less refined, as pitiless as their more fortunate fellows, against whom they are in arms."

What sort of society would these brutes produce by their remodelling?

But almost at once he doubted the truth of his impression.

"After all, what right have I to impute base motives to them on the strength of their convulsed faces? Every form of angry passion deforms and makes the features ugly. How do these threatening faces differ from those of soldiers rushing with shouts of rage into the conflict? When Cynegirus died or the messenger from Marathon fell, their eyes started from their heads and they were horrible to behold."

Then by the side of the ferocious faces, he saw others so pale, so sorrowful and tender, while among them was that of a fair young girl who was rather pretty in a savage fashion and very proud. She looked in her rags like a hamadryad. Then also he could see the ascetic faces of the enlightened.

The black masses moved slowly, straight towards the window from which Hermann was watching them without being seen. They occupied several minutes in traversing the distance between the garden gate and the Palace moat. Hermann noticed that they kept to the paths and respected the lawns and flower-beds.

While watching the human wave grow in size as it approached, he meditated, and clear, bold thoughts, though they were too simple and incomplete—like those of the martyr who at the last moment passes in review in his own mind the reasons for his faith and death—crowded in the Prince's mind with strange rapidity.

"What will be the end of it all? Let me look on the dark side of things and consider the extreme possible consequences of what I have dared to do. Evidently I expose myself

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to the danger of some accident, some misunderstanding between the people and the troops or the police; the impatience of an officer or the sudden folly of a fanatic might cause the demonstration to end in riot, and the riot in revolution. A violent and complete revolution; that is the extreme limit of the hypothesis. Now have I the right to run this risk? Let us put the clock forward to judge. I am supposing that the revolution is accomplished, the old order overthrown, the new established—for better or for worse, like every order in the world—upon new principles. Will humanity have lost by it? Will this society be worth less than the other? Yes, there will have been acts of destruction and vengeance; the innocent will have been massacred, myself perhaps among the number. But what will be the total of these crimes compared with the silent iniquities, the stifled injustices which the old order masked and by which it was maintained? Will the new society be brutal and inelegant? Will it exist without art, literature and luxuries? Well, it is possible to live without all that? My best days were those when I lived near to nature, in the solitude of the fields, like a shepherd or a labourer. Then who knows? New souls, types of humanity yet unknown, would perhaps be revealed. Men have an almost inexhaustible faculty of adaptation to all the external conditions of social life. Disorder would not reign for ever, because it would never suit more than a very small minority. Last of all, there would be as much virtue and abnegation in that society

as in the old, for the roots of human nature change hardly at all, and altruism, too, is in nature; there is less of it there, that is all. When the same injustice and violence re-appeared in other forms, would they be worse than those we see? What pity do we deserve? Every man incapable of accommodating himself to the life which the new order would impose on individuals, that is to say, every man incapable of living at the expense of others and contenting himself with a modest competence—and that also does not prevent the real nobility of life which is in the thoughts alone,—need not be an evil man, but still does not deserve very keen interest. It is the lack of virtue, even average virtue, which makes the Conservatives so furiously oppose all social transformation. It is, too, this lack of virtue which will without a doubt prevent the revolution bearing full fruit, and in that case the lax humanity of to-morrow will be able to explain the vile humanity of yesterday; but it will not be able to absolve it. If we are all beasts of prey, a great displacement of injustice would surely be a kind and a beginning of justice. Then, whatever happens, my conscience is at rest."

The crowd was now only two hundred metres from the Palace. There were no shouts to be heard; but the noise of the tramping was more terrible than all the shouting in the world. Hermann could distinctly see in the first row a hideous head, evidently that of an assassin. But although this was nothing or hardly anything and his passing sensation did not alter

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the root of things, he was no longer so certain of his reasoning. He thought :

"This is one of the strangest moments of my life. I seem to be playing a game of pitch-and-toss with the friendliness or ferocity, the good sense or stupidity, of this crowd. The stake is my own belief. I am trying an experiment from which I shall emerge with my dearest ideas confirmed, or else shorn of all my illusions and disgusted with men for ever."

He cried aloud, in tones of earnest supplication : "Oh, God ! make these people to understand ! Keep them from evil ! "

"Poor Hermann ! " a voice said.

He turned and saw his cousin Renaud. He hurried towards him like a man seeking a refuge or in need of a friend :

"Renaud, my dear Renaud, do you not approve of my actions? Am I not right to have confidence? "

"Oh ! I have already told you that I pity you. Do as you like : you are sure to do wrong. It is a sad thing to be a Prince in the days when he must be either a fool or a ruffian. I only thirst for one thing : that is simply to be one individual in a crowd."

He offered Hermann a parchment :

"Come, sign this certificate, which I have had prepared in accordance with our arrangement."

"Do you want me to? "

"I implore you."

"Shall you have no regrets? "

"None whatever."

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When Hermann had signed :

"Thank you," Renaud said. "You have just given me my freedom. From this moment, I am plain Jean Werner, second lieutenant on leave from his ship. At last I can breathe freely."

"Do you go soon?"

The noise outside increased. Hermann approached the window and watched the people advance. But Renaud, without moving and heedless of the sight outside—like a man cured of vain curiosity—calmly replied :

"I embark to-morrow. I am taking with me a woman I love, whom I could not marry if I remained a Prince. She is a little acrobat, Lollia Tosti. We shall get married far away. I am taking with me enough money to live comfortably. I am asking myself whether that is quite an honourable thing to do; but a person is always a coward on some point: I fear poverty for my love, and tell myself after all that the money I possess without having earned is the salary for what my ancestors—some of them, at least—have accomplished for the good of the country! Good-bye, dear cousin."

But the crowd had reached the low wall of the ancient moat which still separated them from the façade of the palace.

A thought flashed through Hermann's mind which sent a tremor through his body :

"If they ask me to lower the drawbridge what shall I do?"

But the crowd did not appear to dream of penetrating into the Palace. Instead the

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swarming mass arranged itself along the low wall, and suddenly a tremendous cry arose.

“Renaud, what are they shouting?”

“Well,” Renaud replied, “it is not: ‘Long live the King!’”

The shouting redoubled and took shape; a name rose out of the tumult uttered by thousands of voices:

“Audotia—Audotia!”

“They want,” Renaud said, “you to give her back to them, and I understand their reason. Their friend is a very unreasonable and dangerous person to us, but she is very original, and the only one, to my knowledge, who practises absolute charity—except towards us.”

“Give her back to them? I cannot do it, I cannot do it, Renaud, I call you to witness. The black flag she bore is the standard of insurrection. It expresses despair and the necessity to resort to desperate measures. Now the people are not in that position; they have no right to signify that they are, since their Prince has confidence in them and desires their welfare.”

He was set against this question of the black flag, and astonished, in spite of the knowledge he believed he possessed of simple minds, that the people did not understand the subtleties of his logic, but he felt that this last scruple was the dividing line which separated him, the guardian of order, from avowed complicity with the army of revolt.

The shouting assumed a threatening aspect.

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Hermann rushed to the window and wished to open it :

"I am going to show myself, and speak to them."

Renaud held him back.

"They will hiss you, dear friend. Have you a butcher's head? Have you Danton's muzzle and voice of thunder with which to harangue the mob? But let us look ! These functions do not suit our style of beauty, dear Hermann."

"Quite true," the Prince said.

He gazed at the crowd, which was becoming denser and more turbulent, and his will became inflexible. He murmured : "I ought not. No, I ought not." But a distress worse than death filled his heart.

"So you are abandoning me, Renaud? You are deserting me at the time I am most wretched, when every one else has already left me? For, you see, I feel around me the disavowal and withdrawal of all those who live upon the country, and look upon me as head-policeman of the land. So I have the people against me because I am the Prince, and all the rest of the nation because I love the people ! This is the time you select to leave me !"

"I have not chosen it, Hermann. But what do you want me to do here? I cannot help you. The world looks upon me as a fool because I have lived after my own fashion. If it were thought that I supported you, that again would do you harm. Therefore I am going away. I enthusiastically renounce my eventual claim to the throne ; I am leaving the

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country ; I shall disappear. It is very nice to disappear."

Now the shouts from outside had died away. The crowd had gradually moved towards the right and entered the Queen's Avenue, which ran alongside one of the wings of the Palace.

Into this avenue opened the archway to the inner courtyard, now full of cavalry and infantry, and in it was the police headquarters, whither Audotia Latanief had been taken.

"What will they do?" the Prince anxiously asked.

"It is quite simple. They are very plucky ! They are going to set their friend free."

"Come," Hermann said.

CHAPTER XIX

HE hurried Renaud through galleries, along narrow and winding passages, through low doorways, and past staircases built in the thickness of the walls, for the Palace, having been restored and enlarged at various times, was arranged in parts like the castle of melodrama. They traversed the corridor where Prince Manfred had been assassinated by the orders of his brother Otto III, passed through the chamber where Queen Ortrude, aided by her lover, had strangled King Christian V, and the low hall where King Christian VI had kept confined for ten years, and then left to die of starvation, the old King Conrad VIII, whom he charged with insanity.

They at last reached one of the corner turrets, which had once been a prison, but was now a chapel. Thence, through three windows as narrow as loopholes, was a view of the whole of the Queen's Avenue and the outer façade of the left wing of the Palace.

As they entered, they saw in the shadows a woman kneeling at a desk shaken with sobs. She was Princess Wilhelma. On seeing her husband she suddenly dried her tears and

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assumed her mask of impassible dignity before resuming her supplication.

Hermann would have wished her to continue simply to weep.

He passed behind the altar, ascended some steps, opened a fanlight in one of the narrow and heavy windows and looked out.

The trees in places hid the roadway and broad paths of the avenue. This is what he saw in the distance, through the openings in the foliage :

The crowd was rushing against the archway, trying to force the heavy door with blows of stones and bars of iron and by using the pole of a cart as a battering-ram. Men constructed a short ladder and tried to raise themselves to the windows on the first floor. All the window-panes from this part of the Palace fell with a crash under a rain of stones, and as they dropped together with the stones upon the heads of the assailants, the fury of the people redoubled, like that of a lunatic wounding himself. A continuous uproar filled the air. Several black flags floated, swaying on the eddies of the crowd like birds of funereal augury upon a raging sea.

Then, occupying the whole of the avenue, appeared a squadron of cuirassiers, which had emerged from the inner courtyard of the Palace through one of the doors in the right wing, and had come to take the crowd in the rear. The cavalry halted. Hermann saw the gestures of the officer as he three times ordered the crowd to disperse, but his words were of no avail. The cavalry advanced slowly. More

violent eddies agitated the crowd, though it did not disperse. When the front rank of the horses reached the crowd, it seemed to swell. Heads disappeared submerged in the ebullition. Hermann realized that bodies were being trampled underfoot. Faithful to their orders, the cavalry did not draw their swords. But the maddened crowd tugged at their boots, and hung on to their bridles. Suddenly, without Hermann seeing how it happened, the crowd had re-formed behind the squadron. The rear ranks of the cuirassiers faced about. Stones were thrown at them. Their faces were bruised and torn, and from beneath more than one helmet the blood trickled. Some defended themselves with their scabbards or with the stocks of their carbines. Horses reared. A trooper was pulled from his saddle by furious hands and did not reappear.

The orderly officer was behind Hermann, at the foot of the steps, awaiting orders.

"Come," Hermann said; "they have asked for it. The soldiers are human, too. Order up the infantry and let them fire, after the three orders to disperse have been given!"

"Very well, sir."

Hermann put his hands up to his head.

"Ah! the brutes! the brutes! the brutes!" he cried. "But why, O God? Why?" •

The squadron assailed in front and at the rear defended itself as best it could. Without waiting for orders the troopers had drawn their swords. The *mêlée* became murderous.

The door which the insurgents had just before been assailing suddenly opened, and the

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infantry marched into the avenue with fixed bayonets. Three commands to disperse, which the maddened crowd did not even appear to hear, were uttered, then a volley was fired. That made in the crowd a circular gap, just like the stroke of a scythe leaves in a wheat-field. Two or three thousand of the rioters in their turn found themselves sandwiched between the infantry and the cavalry, and were as surely condemned as a beast in a slaughter-house. Mad with rage, they rushed hither and thither, hurling themselves against the bayonet-points. A second volley opened up fresh gaps in the moving throng, but they were quickly filled up. Then several troopers, hit by the infantry's bullets, fell from their horses. The crowd hurled itself upon them.

Wilhelma had gone out a few seconds before, without speaking.

Hermann returned to his study, followed by his tall, thin cousin. He dropped into an arm-chair.

"Do you understand, now, why I am going away?" Renaud said, in his calm and even voice. "Yesterday I saw the King; I wished him good-bye. He hardly recognized me; and I do not think he did so for any length of time. Poor uncle! He never was very kind to me; his natural affections were not very strong. But perhaps he was better than we are, for he believed in something, and prettily played his part, with stern conviction, too. All this which now makes you pale with anguish would have appeared to him the simplest thing in the world. But listen. Soon, in the course of a

few weeks, you will receive thoroughly well-authenticated documents, which will establish the fact that I have been shipwrecked or that I have been killed by accident when out shooting; in short, that I am dead. It will not be true. I tell you because you are the person I do not desire to deceive. You will officially circulate the news of my death. Then at last I shall be really free. Promise me that."

"Very well," Hermann said.

A few minutes heavy with anguish slowly passed. At last the officer reappeared.

"Is it ended?" Hermann asked.

"Yes, sir. It was over when the order to 'cease fire' was given."

"The new pattern rifles have done wonders. How many are killed?"

"It cannot yet accurately be stated. Between five and six hundred perhaps, and a large number wounded. The others only wanted to get away. They were allowed to pass. Order has been restored, or will be very shortly."

"You see," Renaud said, "you no longer need me. Good-bye, my poor Hermann."

"Good-bye, Renaud. You are happy."

"You will do as I have asked you?"

"What?"

"Did you not hear what I said?"

"No."

"Then I will write to you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

The two cousins embraced.

When Renaud had gone:

"Are there among the killed and wounded

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any women and children?" Hermann asked the officer.

"About sixty, sir."

"Have a list of the victims with the address of their relations prepared as quickly as possible and sent to me."

"Yes, sir."

"I have already thought of it, Hermann, and given the necessary orders," Princess Wilhelma said as she entered.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN, two hours before, Wilhelma had left Hermann, wounded by his harsh words, she had first of all visited her son's room, covered the child with tragic caresses, as the circumstances required, and had derived some consolation from telling herself that, if she must die, she would die as an Archduchess, in an attitude and with words which would perhaps become historic. Then she began to wander aimlessly through the Palace corridors.

She met Otto there.

"Have you seen Hermann? Have you spoken to him?" she asked.

Otto, still livid from his interview with his brother, looked his worst, and had an air of cowardly and spiteful swagger. Usually his sister-in-law avoided him, knowing his abominable vices and guessing his shameful life. But at this instant the pure Princess felt she had an ally in this blackguard. If he abused, even to the extent of crime, the privileges of his rank, at least he must value those privileges. Since it was now a question for the Kings, whether they were to cease to exist or not, to dishonour the kingdom seemed to Wilhelma less criminal, after all, than to

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surrender and voluntarily lose it. Her ideas were something like those of devotees in whose eyes an unworthy priest is less dangerous than a priest who is publicly an unbeliever.

"Ah! yes," Otto growled, "he is putting us in a fine position! I told him so just now."

"Ah well?"

"There is nothing to be done, when these dreamers get hold of an idea. No, I have never seen any one devote so much application and obstinacy to self-destruction. Ah! she can boast of influencing him!"

"Who, she?"

"Nothing. Pardon."

"Mademoiselle de Thalberg, is it not?" Wilhelma said, with difficulty restraining herself.

"Permit me to point out to you, my dear Wilhelma, that it was you who mentioned her name."

"Then it is she."

"Oh! I am not betraying a great secret by repeating after every one else that she governs him absolutely, that he sees nothing except through her eyes, and does nothing but by her orders. It was for her that he pardoned Audotia Latanief. You remember that was his first act as King, and you see how successful it has been."

"Are you sure of this, Otto?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Do not speak so lightly of it, Otto. Every one of your words wounds me to the bottom of my heart."

"Ah! my dear Wilhelma, I can tell you

what it is. You, I, all of us, in fact, are at present in the hands of that little adventuress : that is the truth. If ten thousand rebels paraded the city streets in triumph it would be because Mademoiselle Frida did not want them to be disturbed. That is how history is made and how kingdoms are sacrificed."

"No, Otto, I do not believe you, I will not believe you. If it were true, first of all he would keep her always near him, he would not like to be separated from her. The girl amused him by her quaintness ; then he talked to her, because he happened to be of assistance to her. There is nothing more, I would swear."

"Then why were you the first to mention her just now?"

"Because I am afraid of everything, because I am mad. But for months she has been with her great-uncle the Marquis de Frauenlaub."

"With her great-uncle?" Otto said, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, is she not with him?"

"It is possible. Where does he live?"

"At the Château de Frauenlaub, of course."

"Ah!"

"What does that 'Ah!' mean?"

"Nothing. After all, the girl has not to give us an account of her actions. If she enjoys herself, I am not the man to prevent her."

"What then? What is it?"

"One of my intimate friends was hunting last week, and he pretends he met Mademoiselle

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de Thalberg in the woods, not far from Loewenbrunn, and consequently ten or twelve leagues from Frauenlaub."

Otto was almost speaking the truth. Since his financial embarrassment he had taken refuge in the Château de Loewenbrunn, in order to live there economically. Now one morning when he was riding through the forest he saw, about two hundred yards in front of him, a woman walking quickly whose figure was strangely like Frida's. He quickened his pace to catch her; but the woman disappeared at a turn in the path, and he had not been able to catch sight of her again. Without a doubt she had hidden in the thicket.

"But I think," Otto went on, "what I have just told you ought to reassure you, for I do not know that Hermann, overwhelmed as he is with business, has left Marbourg for the last few months. What is the matter?"

Wilhelma was very pale.

"Hermann," she said, "has been several times to Loewenbrunn to see the King."

Otto assumed an air of supreme pity.

"Poor Wilhelma! poor Wilhelma!"

"Leave me, Otto; I beg of you."

She fled, wandered once more through the galleries, and entered the chapel, where she fell down on her knees and burst into tears.

She prayed, and all the while wept tears of despair and hate. She would have liked to hold this girl, who had robbed her of her husband, to make her suffer, to strangle her with her own hands. Then she was ashamed of being jealous like an ordinary woman. Was

she then to take her revenge like the deceived wife of an ordinary citizen? It was quite another matter: it concerned the safety of the Prince and the State. Yes, but who placed the State and Prince in danger? This girl! Reassured as to the dignity of her own feelings, believing she was hating in her husband's mistress a public criminal, Wilhelma meditated, as she prayed, pitiless vengeance.

At that moment Hermann entered the chapel. With a rapid effort she lifted tearless eyes to him. He appeared so unhappy, this man whose thoughts were his enemy, that she pitied him. She remembered she had once loved him and realized that she did so still: "He is blinded, but his folly is not that of a commonplace soul. Frida rules him because she flatters his dreams. Suppose I, too, were to try to enter into his ideas, to insensibly combat them, and to appear to understand him in order to regain his love? That would be more worthy of me, than this egoistic fury of carnal jealousy, for which I pray you, O God, to absolve me!"

She heard the shouting outside, guessed that blood was being shed, and her woman's heart was touched. When Hermann gave the order to fire on the people, she shuddered; she realized the horror of it all. Hermann's sufferings, and her whole heart was, in a moment, with him: "He will need comfort and consolation. Ah well, I will try to be his consoler. It will be my best way of vanquishing the other woman."

At the sound of the firing she almost fainted.

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She had a longing to cry out: "No! no! not that!" But she reflected that her fear and jealous rage just before were two movements of the same kind, instinctive and common. "I must subdue that, I must be a Princess. But a Princess does not feel hatred against persons; she only obeys superior and disinterested motives. After just repression, the duty of universal royal protection ought to have its turn."

Then it was she got up to give orders to help the families of the victims. She told herself that it would please Hermann.

But when she told him what she had just done, he did not even thank her. Reclining upon a couch with his hands hanging down, he turned to his wife a dejected face with drops of sweat standing on it.

"Ah well! are you satisfied?"

She forgot her resolution to be gentle and pleading, so that her bearing remained haughty, and her eyelids frowned, while her lips essayed words of loving supplication.

"Don't use any more harsh words to me, Hermann. I know how painful a duty you have accomplished, and like you I have a broken heart. For that reason I have come to you so that in this time of trial you may feel that near you there is one who loves you. I should like to be of some use, to console and comfort you a little."

"No, Wilhelma, leave me. I am the one of us two who has a woman's weakness; I see that I inspire you with pity, and I do not desire to do so. I need to be alone. As soon

as possible, I shall go and take refuge at Loewenbrunn."

"Loewenbrunn?" Wilhelma asked in anxious tones.

"Yes, there in solitude, you understand, I shall appease my conscience and forget."

"Loewenbrunn? But, Hermann, it is quite impossible for you to think of leaving Marbourg just now. How do you know that it is all over, and that they will not begin again to-morrow?"

"I will wait as long as is necessary. Make your mind easy: I have begun to kill; I will continue, if needs be. But from all appearance the people have had their fill, at least for a time. I therefore hope in a few days to go to Loewenbrunn to visit my father."

"I will go with you, Hermann."

"No, Wilhelma, I beg of you not to do so. I require the most profound solitude. I shall live the life of a hermit, of a savage, and I desire neither Court nor etiquette, in fact, none of those things you deem indispensable. You would be too bored there, I assure you."

"I shall not be bored, my dear Hermann, as I shall be with you. I have thought things over. I shall be to you what I have not known how to be even from the earliest days of our married life. You shall tell me what displeases you in me, and I will try to correct my fault. I will interest myself in all that interests you: I will no longer jar upon you, nor will I contradict you; I will try to enter into your ideas."

"My ideas?" Hermann sneered. "Have I

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any left now? No, Wilhelma, once again, no. I have just dared—and at the cost of bloodshed—the thing dearest to you in the whole world : your power. What more can I do? ”

Wilhelma approached him, and slipped down upon the carpet with her two elbows upon the arms of the couch, and her chin upon her clasped hands, in a pose of caressing feminine supplication. The wrinkle disappeared from her brow. For the first time the Princess was but an amorous woman who wished to recover her husband's love. The time was well chosen. Had not Hermann just said that he had no longer any ideas? The bitterness of his replies simply demonstrated his suffering. “It is that suffering,” she thought, “which will deliver him to me, as the other woman is far away and I am near at hand.”

She went on in a lowered voice, trembling a little as she fixed upon the Prince a look of entreaty with her beautiful and submissive eyes :

“All I want, Hermann, is your heart. The woman talking to you is no longer the Archduchess, as you sometimes call me, but your wife. Do you not at last feel that I love you? that if just now I entreated you not to destroy yourself, it was because in saving the Prince Royal you were saving my husband? and that, if I have been self-willed and tactless, it was because I was afraid of something I did not wish to speak about, and my thoughts caused me to lose control of myself? Prove to me that I was mistaken by allowing me to accompany you.”

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But, while the Princess was speaking, Hermann could distinctly see in a side of the deserted park a vision of the woman he loved, but who was far away. The insistence of the woman in his presence exasperated him, nothing being more unbearable to a man than the affection of a woman he does not love. He was angry with her because of her love, and found her odious because she in this way put him in the wrong. He replied with constraint :

"My dear Wilhelma, the effort you are making to be affectionate to me deeply touches me. I should like to respond, but I cannot. Forgive me."

As she timidly made an attempt to put her arms around his neck, he quickly drew back on a terrible thought crossing his mind. Why did she display at this exact moment, an hour after the slaughter, such provokingly amorous tendencies? Horrible! Was it the recompense for what he had just done that she was pretending to offer him? Then these ugly words fell from his lips :

"You should have, madam, spoken to me like this ten years ago. Allow me time to forget under what circumstances your heart opened, to forget that it was the day on which my kingdom became stained with blood that you took it into your head to love me."

Wilhelma got up, outraged by his injustice and trembling at the insult :

"So, you will go alone to Loewenbrunn?"

"Yes."

"To see your mistress, is not that your object?"

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Hermann looked her up and down. She resembled a statue of Tragedy, with her straight nose, her eyelids close together, the too regular curve of her lips, and her robust neck. But it was not the poor woman's fault if her classic beauty lent a theatrical majesty to her least guarded expression of the most genuine sentiments. But he was irritated because she was always so beautiful in her artistic beauty, and so like a plaster cast in an art school.

"Ah! that is the secret of your great change! You are jealous, madam! Fi!"

"Yes, jealous. For if you repulse me so harshly it is because you entirely belong to that woman, who is your evil genius. She it is who is guilty of your to-day's cowardice; and if you are afraid because you have done your duty, wretched man, it is because you are thinking of the account you must render her. She has taken my husband from me; because of her, you forget your duties as a father and as King; I am menaced by her as a woman, as a mother, and as Queen. But let her take care! I will defend myself, and by every means, do you hear? I here swear a solemn oath I will!"

He shrugged his shoulders, more out of weariness than disdain.

"You are wrong," she went on in slow, grave tones, "you are wrong to despise this warning. To defend my rights, that is to say, to do my duty, you are not yet aware of what I am capable."

He replied in a bored tone: .

"Madam, you are mistaken, I have no mistress at Loewenbrunn."

"At Loewenbrunn or elsewhere! I entreat you, do not descend to lying, Prince of Marbourg."

"Madam, I give you my royal word (you will believe that, I hope) that Mademoiselle de Thalberg is not my mistress. Now, you shall come to Loewenbrunn, if you wish."

Wilhelma remained for a minute speechless. If Frida was not Hermann's mistress, what tie united the Prince and that young barbarian?

"I will go to Loewenbrunn," she said. "For if it is as you say, that only makes matters worse."

CHAPTER XXI

HERMANN was filled with anguish and remorse. His will, through having been tense for so long, was like a broken spring. He was the more unhappy because, while taking away his own confidence in himself, the check in his enterprise left intact, in his eyes, the reasons which had urged him to it. Yes, all that had happened was his fault, and not that of the poor creatures. Whatever they had done, he did not succeed in cursing them, and felt himself without energy against them. Little by little compassion had become a kind of mania with him. Just because he was a Prince and his rank kept him far removed from those with whom he had made it a rule to always sympathise. Perhaps the constant and voluntary representation of universal misery has a more powerful effect upon the mind, is more hypnotic, if the expression is permissible, than a close view of particular miseries from the obsession of which one can deliver oneself by trying in person to aid the sufferers. The great doers of good, Vincent de Paul and Sister Rosalie, were not sorrowful; they saved themselves from sadness by continuous action. But Hermann was operated by a general and

abstract pity, which had become with him a fixed idea.

Then the picture of eight hundred corpses pursued him. It was much more than his nerves could bear. His reason vainly bore him witness that he had only been the justiciary: he felt he was a murderer all the same. He reproached himself for his obstinacy on the subject of the black flag. Why, after all, had he prohibited it? Was it not a remnant of government prejudice, unknown to him, a pharisaic conception of legality? What folly! evidently the black flag had not in the ideas of the demonstrators the precise significance which Hermann had persisted in attributing to it. It signified to them, not revolt, but a great mourning of the wretched. If he had allowed it to be unfurled, or if later he had consented to set free Audotia, who knows? perhaps the day would have remained peaceful and the events of the day borne good fruit. To take away from the slumbering animal in the crowd all opportunity for breaking loose, preventive repression (Hellborn had well named it) or unlimited tolerance was necessary. Hermann had not known how to choose between the two. Through his fault; the cause of justice and humanity was a little less forward than before.

But, worst of all, it was for a long time compromised. Without a doubt the experiment Hermann had tried proved nothing against the truth of his principles, since he had not had the courage to carry the experiment to its extreme limits. But by stopping half way he had made it impossible to begin over again:

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the people's crime prevented that; and the people's crime troubled Hermann all the more, because he considered himself secretly responsible for it.

If he dared however?

The objections of the egoists, which were those of the sages as well, came back to his mind very strongly, since he had been face to face with the brutality and cruelty of crowds.

The socialistic dream is an idyll, composed of charity and mutual benevolence. But on the other hand, given present society, it would appear probable that the era of this romance could only be inaugurated by violence. In other words, this dream can only be conceived and embraced by gentle souls; but the preliminary destruction which its realization supposes, requires ferocity for its accomplishment.

Hermann vividly pictured to himself the cowardice of the revolutionary politicians, and at the same time the persevering folly of the people. Yes, it is so; even when their life is known and they have been proved liars, the people continue to follow their exploiters, who are worse than capitalists, and they are forgiven for all their offences, because they know how to utter the illusive words the people need to hear. But what hold can loyal and far-seeing goodness have over wretches who absolutely desire to be deceived?

The dream by which they are decoyed is, besides, very material and earthly at bottom. It is a question of enjoyment on earth to the utmost extent, with a minimum of effort and work for each one. But it is a question, too,

of enjoyment for every one in equal proportions, without the strong taking the share of the weak. That supposes charity, temperance and empire over self, virtues, in short, which up to the present have never had better support than religious creeds. Briefly, the accomplishment of this Pagan dream exacts Christian virtues, virtues which the essence of this dream repudiates.

The dream is in the thoughts of those who believe in it, a return to the natural state, ameliorated, it is true, by centuries of industry and invention. But however artificial the social organization of the old world may appear, yet it is by the play of natural forces that humanity has become what we see it. There is nothing more natural than egoism, nor the instinct of ownership, of conquest and of exploitation; there is nothing more natural than the inequality of bodies and minds, nor the predominance of the strong over the weak. Thus it resolves itself into one of two things: either this ideal society, supposed to conform to nature, would be soon spoiled, as the old world has been by the influence of similar instincts and necessities, or this supposedly natural society would only be able to subsist intact on condition that each of its members restrained the nature in him.

That was very improbable. Hermann knew that very well. He recognized that, if formerly religious faith had alone rendered possible resignation to social injustice, the virtues, of which that faith was the support, could alone secure the establishment and duration of a

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society from which this injustice would be banished. Now the people no longer believed. An unbeliever himself, Hermann had not the hypocrisy to reproach them with their unbelief; but he did not close his eyes to the extent this emancipation of the mind was destructive of goodness and disinterestedness in common people and those who had not found, like him, in a moral code, freely conceived and grasped, the equivalent of the religious code. If these people became the masters, what would they do with their power? What brigandage, what riots, what chaos were to be expected?

But who knows? It is not by itself, it is accidentally and provisionally that the impiety of the people is an evil. But later on?

By an application of thought habitual in him, through the ages, by emphasizing some periods and neglecting others, Hermann reasoned :

“Let us suppose that every race has lost all kinds of religious belief, that at the same time the energy of human passions has been used up (that can already be foreseen), that humanity has at last recognized (this, too, is inevitable) that even egoism is vain, and that it has turned away from egoism, as from all the rest, because of the long proof of its inability to assure a happy life even to the strongest. Then men will say to themselves : ‘ Since we know nothing, have nothing to expect or hope for, since we only appear for an instant on the surface of one of the tiniest planets in the solar system to return at once to eternal night, let us arrange that the passing be not too

sorrowful, or else that it be so only to the smallest possible number of us. Let us mutually support and help ourselves. Then it becomes even natural to love one another. For the conviction, without exception, of our misery, the vanity of all things, and the renunciation of everything in the hope of a "beyond," are they not precisely what all the generations of the past have sought without finding, the discovery of a real bond of souls, and communion in a really universal way? If it is necessary for men to agree to be saved, who does not see that it is not in the affirmation, but in abstention and lack of hope, that they can really agree, and even do so lovingly like brothers in ignorance and resignation? That is far, very far in the future.' But it will come. Humanity without a doubt can only reach that stage by shocks. The French Revolution was one. Then thirty thousand human heads were sacrificed. But since that time millions and millions of creatures have known better conditions of life, and have perhaps experienced thoughts and sentiments not realized before. If I dared!"

But he did not dare. He felt more than ever the accumulated weight of resistance against the establishment of ideal justice in an aristocratic and plebeian society eight or ten centuries old. Even in case he had the courage to make a second experiment, the classes and public bodies interested in the preservation of the past would not this time allow him. Besides, if he had ideas liberal enough and bold enough to consent to revolution and its extreme

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consequences—even his own destruction—decidedly he had not a bold enough heart to run the risk and bear the spectacle of violence and immediate catastrophe—beneficent though they might be in their maturity!

Then even if he had the courage, and he were allowed to venture, the people whom he had tried to massacre would never again believe in him. All he could do to reduce the inevitable harm was to keep order, or if that task was too repulsive to him, to allow others to do so for him, although order might be at the expense of charity and justice.

His own reveries overwhelmed him. He realized their vagueness and incoherence; he suffered through being unable to make them precise. Then he was weary; he felt an overwhelming desire to lay down his burden and to sleep.

He sent for General de Kersten and entrusted to him the task of maintaining order by means he considered suitable. Hermann was so profoundly sorrowful, and so much above every sort of vanity, that he forgave the old soldier the satisfied smile which lifted the ends of his heavy moustache.

"I shall only have, sir, to continue what your Royal Highness has so well begun," the General said, without perhaps realizing the irony of his words.

A state of siege was proclaimed. The next few days, there were disturbances in the streets, which were rigorously put down and more blood was spilled. Most of the strikers at the pinch of hunger returned to the mines and

workshops. The middle class were reassured. The Conservative party came back to Hermann, looking upon him as a saviour, while he appeared to the proletariat as the most odious and treacherous of Princes. Hated by those he loved in his heart, and congratulated by those he detested, he endured the penalty of being publicly misunderstood without any possible remedy.

Audotia Latanief was only sentenced to a week's imprisonment. She was the real cause of the riot and the massacre; but she could only be accused of unfurling the black flag. It would have been possible, by a clever interpretation of the law, to have inflicted on the old revolutionary a severer punishment. Hermann was not willing.

He thought with anxiety of what Frida would say when he saw her again. But that time seemed to him long in coming.

A fortnight after the demonstration, the streets being pacified, and the people terrorized, Hermann set out for Loewenbrunn.

Wilhelma followed him as she had stated.

CHAPTER XXII

THE Château of Orsova was two leagues from Loewenbrunn and half-a-league from the little village of Steinbach, in the midst of the royal preserves. The old walls which surrounded the park were almost entirely concealed by the ivy and the foliage. The house, low and sheltered by clumps of trees, was not visible from a distance, so that those who traversed the forest road could not, unless aware of its existence, see the hermitage hidden in the wood.

The estate being put up for sale on the death of the Marquis d'Orsova, Hermann had bought it secretly, and Frida was installed there in the name of the Countess Leïlof. Her only servants were the gamekeeper Günther, a rough old soldier but a good fellow, and his granddaughter Kate, a pretty but untidy girl with wild eyes. The old gamekeeper was the only one who knew the Prince's secret.

Günther looked after the three or four flower-beds which were in front of the steps and the kitchen garden hidden away behind the stables indifferently. Kate swept the rooms and did the cooking. Frida found it to be very satisfactory like that.

She was delighted with her return to rural life. She took gentle strolls in the park, which had been so long neglected that the grass grew upon the paths; and she particularly delighted at one end of the domain in an expanse of purple heather and a large pool on the surface of which water-lilies floated, often tinted by the sunset.

At first she sometimes ventured into the neighbouring woods. There one day she saw she was being followed by a horseman who resembled Otto. Fortunately she was able at a bend in the path to turn aside into a thicket. Since then she had not left the precincts of the park.

She also wished to work with her hands, work being the duty of every one in the ideal city. She looked after the poultry and spent hours with Günther putting in cuttings. She set herself in her conversation to treat Günther and Kate on terms of complete equality, and this annoyed the man and made the girl laugh.

The rest of the time she spent in reading books of revolutionary sociology, utopias full of vague effusions or arid treatises with scientific pretensions, in order to strengthen her faith. In the evenings when the shadows lengthened, when the flowers gleamed in the dying light with restful glory and the rounded tree-tops stood out from a golden background, or at other times when the sky was grey and the wind swayed the supple foliage, she played a little German music on the piano. She felt at the same time sad and happy, like one of those mystics who confound certain delightful

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bodily troubles with the sweetness of prayer, just as Catherine de Sienne when, holding in her pale hands the head of the executed criminal who loved her, felt flow through her limbs a "river of milk," and recognized in that pleasure an effect and a sign of the grace of God present in her: so in the same way, while a languor came to her of the twilight, of her youth, and her love for a man, Frida believed herself to be touched by her dream of universal charity, and recognized in this pleasant desire for tears with which she was overcome the sign of a communion, at last perfect, with all the suffering souls scattered throughout the world, and which, like her, were satisfied at this same hour, the approach of the blessed night.

Her thoughts without ceasing were of Hermann. She was delighted at the idea that she had some slight share in his great work. Several times the Prince had come to see her, and on each occasion he had left his little friend with a feeling of comfort, which he had gained from the contagion of her invincible hope and enthusiasm.

A few days before the demonstration of October the first she wrote to Audotia Latanief, whose address she had obtained from Hermann without explaining her reason for desiring it. Since she had left her in Paris, all communication between them had ceased; but Frida knew very well that the old woman could not have forgotten her. She explained in her letter Hermann's views and projects, boasted of the Prince's goodness and generosity and begged her to believe in it, not to impede his work,

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and to preach to the people confidence and patience.

Audotia did not reply to her letter.

When Frida learnt, from a note from Hermann, of the disturbance and its sanguinary suppression, she experienced strange sensations. Certainly the news made her unhappy; but it seemed to her that she ought to have been more so than she was and in a different way. She realized how horrible the events were; she understood that she ought to have a reckoning with Hermann, and that he would expect it. Yet the cause of her sorrow was less the bankruptcy, for a long while irreparable, of her most cherished ideas, than her friend's suffering. Despite all her efforts she thought less of the people than of Hermann. She pictured to herself his despair, promised in her own mind that she would not address any reproach to him even indirectly, and secretly in advance developed a sweetness with which to console him.

Apparently, in spite of her reading and her efforts to persevere in her faith, the tranquil charm of the mighty woods acted upon her. The peace in which she was enveloped, the company of plants and animals, the delicate intoxication of the mornings and the magic of the evenings, the sentiment of the august fatality of natural laws, the slow and serene manifestations of which she could see every moment, all these things made it more distant and awkward for her to imagine living and suffering humanity. While those other sentiments which originated in general and abstract

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representations of human groups became imperceptibly deadened in the young revolutionary, in return the natural, instinctive, and feminine in her mystic love for the Prince was displayed and strengthened in this solitude. Even the absence of Hermann brought him more often to her mind. Already at some hours the mistress in her disconcerted the enlightened woman.

One morning Frida received a note from Audotia Latanief consisting only of these words : "I shall come and see you. Your old friend," and the signature.

That was the same day that Prince Hermann was to come to Orsova after nightfall.

CHAPTER XXIII

GÜNTHER, who was helping his granddaughter to tidy the drawing-room, stopped in a rage. He shouted, with uplifted hand :

“Say that is not true ! ”

Kate, protecting herself with her elbow, more from habit than from fear, slyly asked :

“What, grandfather ? ”

“That you danced with that boy yesterday at the Steinbach feast.”

“Did you see me, grandfather ? ”

“I did not see you ; but I heard about it.”

“From whom ? ”

“Persons who saw you. Repeat that it is not true ! ”

“I had forgotten. But what harm is there in it ? ”

“A girl who respects herself ought only to enjoy herself with people she knows. That fellow does not come from this part of the country ; none knew where he came from. Since the King has been at Loewenbrunn any number of loafers, grooms and stablemen have been about here. I should be very surprised if they were all honest men.”

“In any case, grandfather, he was not a groom.”

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"How do you know?"

"That was quite evident."

"In what way?"

"From his manners."

Günther sneered:

"Perhaps he was a lord in disguise?"

"I do not say that. But I should think he was a man of good family."

"A man of good family!" the old gamekeeper growled. "Wait till I catch you with him!"

Once more he lifted his hand, and again Kate parried with her elbow a blow which never came. This double mechanical movement usually accompanied their conversations, but did not entail any consequences.

For Günther adored the girl, although he was always grumbling at her and almost every day threatened to strike her.

He was a simple man, born to carry out orders without discussing them: the duty of a soldier, of a subject, of a Christian, of a husband and a father, and of a gamekeeper. On his retirement from the army after three re-enlistments, he had married a delicate little peasant girl who died leaving him a daughter. At eighteen this girl had been seduced by a travelling workman; she had given birth to Catherine, and had died a few years later, of weariness, of grief, and because Günther gave her too hard a life. Kate had grown up with her grandfather, clumsily directed by his rough hands, though she knew him to be kind at heart; for the old man had repented of being pitiless to Kate's mother, and his scolding

tenderness for his granddaughter was increased by his long-standing remorse.

Yet at times he saw that Kate was escaping him. She was pretty, but not quite in a way that suits a modest girl. Her lips were too red and too pouting, and her eyes, without her intending them to, ogled the men. Besides, she was a slattern, and dressed untidily in clothes without buttons which seemed not to fit her body, but which she wore in the coquetish way of a daughter of Bohemia, with glass trinkets and bits of scarlet ribbon; while the way she had of dressing her hair, of untidily twisting her thick plaits, always gave her the appearance of having just got out of bed. All these things offended the strict old soldier, used to the outward minutiae of military discipline. He was not easy in his mind about her. More than once he had discovered in a corner of Kate's wardrobe trinkets, rings and chains, of which he had demanded the origin. She asserted she had bought them with her savings (for she did needlework for the ladies of Steinbach), and the old man had not pushed his investigations any further. She was so gentle and coaxing to him! So she was with every one else as well. She was a good girl. He yielded, without knowing it, to the equivocal charm which emanated from her. Without doubt he remained on the look-out; but the girl was artful enough to deceive his grumbling vigilance and to prevent his suspicions being confirmed.

The truth was that all the grooms at the royal château, whom she met at Steinbach

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when she went there for provisions, did with her as they pleased, provided they were young and passably built. She asked them for nothing more than the pleasure, a glass of lemonade and sometimes a neckerchief or a bit of imitation lace. She was the nicest and most indulgent of all the grooms' girls.

If she had not yielded at once to Prince Otto, although she guessed he was a man of good family, it was because she thought him a trifle *passé*.

He was indeed *blasé*. His anxieties of the last few months had whitened his temples, hollowed his cheeks, and enlarged the pouches under his eyes. His château at Grotenbach had been sold, and after Issachar had obtained a judgment for 12,000 francs to be deducted every year from his income of 120,000 francs, he had come to bury himself alive at Loewenbrunn, though he was prodigiously bored there. As there was nothing either in his heart or mind with which to honourably fill the void of his hours, his solitude was peopled with shameful dreams. For a long time he had been so *blasé*—and yet unsatisfied—that vice no longer appealed to him; if it did, not unless there was something particular about it. Nothing save a certain dirty animal smell excited him now. But he was not really aroused unless there was danger and a possibility of the odour of blood being mingled with the other smell. So this irreproachable civilized gentleman led the simple life and returned to nature. Already in Marbourg, Paris and London he had indulged in caprices of low and dirty debauchery. In

the humble way in which such things are to-day permitted to the *blasé* he had sampled the experiences of Nero and at night in disguise had frequented dens of infamy, and quarrelled with their frequenters.

Otto in this way had acquired the habit of disguising himself. Besides that, he belonged to the commonest physical type in Alfania, and the big ungainly fellow, dressed like a farmer, who had approached the gamekeeper's granddaughter at the fair at Steinbach was very much unlike the popular pictures of the Prince.

Kate suspected nothing: only the man appeared to her to be distinguished, with a something beneath the nonchalance of his manners which made her feel a little afraid. As for Otto, his blood quickened on his first glance at this untidy slut who exhaled artless vice from every pore, and he recognized what he was seeking: the possibility of an unexpected sensation.

Günther's blow did not descend. The pretty girl approached the old man and kissed him on his two tanned cheeks. The old man let her do it, still grumbling, but without conviction.

"Grandfather," she asked in a coaxing voice, "do you know that people say that the Princes are at Loewenbrunn with Princess Wilhelmina?"

"Yes, yes! What does it matter to you?"

"Do you know them?" she insisted.

"Do I know them!"

"Have you seen them often?"

"I saw Prince Hermann as a little boy when I was a soldier. I saw him a little later when

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I was servant of one of his orderly officers. I have also seen Prince Otto now and then."

"What are they like?"

"Like anybody else. But we must hurry. Madam will soon be back. She has gone to gather some flowers."

"Then we have time. She loves flowers so!"

"She loves animals too, and is never afraid of making herself dirty. Ah! she is a good little woman."

"First of all, she always stands up for me."

"That is not the best thing she does."

Kate went on:

"She seems very pleased to-day."

She added, with a knowing air:

"I know the reason why."

"Ah?" Günther said, with a little anxiety.

"She is expecting a gentleman this evening. What time is he coming?"

"I do not know," Günther sharply replied. "At night."

"Has he been nere before?"

"No."

Kate assumed a still more cunning air:

"I have an idea."

"Probably a very foolish one."

"I have an idea that they are not married."

"What did I say? What makes you think that?"

"Many things. Why does madam live alone and never leave the park? Why does he never come in the daytime? Why——"

Günther interrupted her brutally:

"What business is it of yours? You had

much better keep your ideas to yourself. But first of all, such thoughts should never have occurred to a modest girl who ought to think of nothing but doing good."

Mechanically the big hand was raised, and automatically Kate's downy arm doubled up in self-defence.

"Ah, well," she muttered, "a person cannot speak now."

CHAPTER XXIV

FRIDA came in radiantly, carrying an enormous armful of wild flowers.

"Here are some flowers!"

She threw them on the sofa and began to arrange them in bunches.

"Did madam gather as many as that?" Günther said.

"Yes."

"Ah well! madam has not wasted much time."

Frida became serious.

"Don't say that, Günther, I have asked you before. Say: 'Ah! well madam, you have not wasted your time.'"

"But it was out of respect, madam."

"That is nothing to do with respect, Günther. Besides, it is not your respect I desire: it is your friendship."

"Oh! madam," Günther said in astonishment.

"That is it. Have you done tidying here, Kate?"

"Almost, madam."

"There are no cakes for tea, my child. Would you like to go to Steinbach to get some?"

"I will go at once, madam."

Kate was not only delighted to go for a walk: she was pleased to obey Frida, whom she loved for her kindness and goodness, and for other reasons, too, which she could not clearly define. From the glimpses Frida gave in her talks of her humanitarian dreams and utopias, Kate obtained a confused notion that her mistress' ideas implied candid and almost unbounded tolerance. Without doubt Frida's chaste grace inspired in the hussy involuntary respect, and she would have been overwhelmed with shame, she thought, if the lady had known how she lived: but she was sure, even then, Frida would not have treated her roughly. Now, since she suspected that Frida had a lover, without thinking on that account that the moral chasm was narrowed between them, Kate cherished her still more.

"I should have been surprised had she required pressing to go," Günther growled. "Go along, and do not stop talking to the boys."

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"Does that sometimes happen?" Frida asked.

"Too often, madam."

"But Kate is a modest girl, and she knows what it is right for her to say and listen to."

"Of course," the hussy interposed.

"You always think well of people," the gamekeeper replied.

"That is better than thinking evil, and does not cost any more. Sometimes by believing good of a person one can produce it in that individual. Go along, Kate, and do not be too long on the way."

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When the girl had gone :

"You are too good to her, madam," the old man said.

"You are a little too disagreeable and suspicious, Günther."

"I have my reasons for that, madam. She has no one but me, and I have no one but her. So I watch over her. I do not wish the dead to have a cause to reproach me on her account."

"Ah well, you should talk to her kindly, and make her feel that you love her."

Frida completed the arrangement of her flowers in the flower-stand. She moved back a little to judge the effect.

"Is it very pretty like that, Günther?"

"Yes, madam!"

"He will be pleased with it. I am so afraid he will be sad!"

"Why, madam?"

"Those terrible happenings at Marbourg. They must have caused him so much pain!"

"Well, madam, if I were in his place, that would not prevent me from sleeping."

"Günther!"

"Would you like my views? They have not been sufficiently punished."

"How can you say that, Günther? Remember that women and children were found among the dead."

"That is annoying, I admit. But it is their own fault. Why did they go there? It was not their place. As for the others . . ."

"Perhaps there were among them sufferers and despairing wretches. The rich are some-

times very harsh with the poor. Everything in society is not for the best, Günther."

"Oh! for myself, madam, I do not go into it so deeply. There must be both rich and poor, because it has always been so, and will always be so; even if a fresh beginning were made the same thing would soon happen again. It is in nature, most probably. Those who desire a complete change in the government are for the most part fanatics and of low birth, I have often noticed. Besides, if you want my opinion, perhaps it is not to be happier that we have been put on earth. But, on the other hand, if every individual accepted his lot and did his duty in his allotted sphere, there would still probably be much misery, but there would be less, that is my view."

"In other words, Günther, if no one tries to make people better and more charitable, they will never be made less unhappy?"

"That is what I think, madam."

"Yes, but in order that the poor may become better, must not the rich do so first? Must not they make a beginning?"

"That is true. But what would you do? You cannot force them."

"Who knows? They can at least be made to reflect. I believe that to be the Prince's idea. He desires to be first of all the poor people's King."

"May he be blessed for that thought! But, you see, all the same there are many who are unfortunate through their own fault, because they neither will work nor obey. In that case nothing can be done. To my mind the Prince

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is too good; he dreams of things which are not possible, he has ideas which no one of his rank has ever had before. I hope I am not angering you, madam?"

"No, Günther."

Frida was silent. The gamekeeper's reflections had struck her. Life had been rather hard to this old man: at fourteen or fifteen he had worked on the land, twelve hours a day, to produce crops often poor, the greater part of which were absorbed by the rent; then he had spent fifteen years in the army, taking part in three campaigns in which he had risked his life for the few coins he received at his re-enlistment; then came his return to the country, where for thirty-five years he had lived a life of laborious poverty till the day when Hermann had entrusted him with the care of the château. Now Günther was resigned; he had even been so before this modest windfall in his old age. "Perhaps we have not been sent on earth to be happy," he had said. If that was true? Suppose those resigned to their fate were the only ones right!

But their resignation supposed a Providence, and the personal survival of souls. Frida did not believe that, and so the poor people's faith seemed to her too great an imposition. She was grieved and irritated at the thought of the terrible quantity of ills which the expectation of an eternal Justice made them accept, of the lamentable drafts made by human misery upon a God who would honour them on settling day. Even if He were to fail to honour them, would men have suffered less? Injustice

and sorrow, even transitory, made the young revolutionary's heart swell with indignation, and the good and simple creatures, like Günther, who submitted, filled her at the same time with surprise and unutterable compassion.

At all times, although she herself did not obey any creed or law, imposed or revealed, the marvellous antiquity and efficacy of the faith and example which directed the rough thoughts of the humble life of the old man commanded Frida's respect. Several times she asked herself what, in the secret of his conscience, this honourable and worn representative of tradition thought of her. The idea that he believed her to be the Prince's mistress was intolerable to her. However, she admitted in theory, with her revolutionary friends, the legitimacy of free love, and she did not condemn it with the others. But she was invincibly chaste. Her flesh was as calm as a child's; even at Hermann's side the languor with which she was sometimes enveloped was pure from desire: it was a charm which had something like fear of caresses, and which, in fact, any caress too expressive or strenuous would have disagreeably disturbed. So although she repudiated the secular principles in the name of which the old soldier without a doubt judged her, she could not bear to be condemned by him.

She stopped for a moment the arranging of her flowers, looked Günther straight in the face, and resumed with great seriousness:

"No, Günther, you do not anger me. I

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even desire you to be quite bold with me. I have a weight upon my heart which I desire to remove. Do you love Prince Hermann? Are you devoted to him?"

"I belong to the Prince. He can ask of me what he pleases, even to my blood."

"You not only love him, but you esteem him as well?"

"Oh! madam, how can that word be used between him and me?"

"Answer. Do you believe him incapable of a bad action; of neglecting what you in your position regard as an essential duty?"

"Yes, madam. But I do not quite understand you."

What Frida had to say she found even more embarrassing than she anticipated. At last she went on:

"What are your ideas on the subject of Princess Wilhelma?"

"I have none, madam. I have hardly seen her. She is reported to be rather proud, and not to show herself often."

"Do you think her in a position to be considered unfortunate?"

"How should I know that, madam?"

"I beg of you to answer me, Günther. Your answer means much to me, very much! because you are honourable and I esteem you."

Suddenly taking a desperate resolution, she asked:

"When the Prince comes here, what do you think of him and me?"

Günther was very troubled.

"I do not think at all, madam. The great

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are the great, and I do not know what I should do if I were the Prince."

She stopped him at that.

"You must not say that, Günther. Princes are men, and you have a right to judge them according to your own ideas of good and evil."

But Günther evaded her.

"I am entirely devoted to the Prince. I execute the commands he gives me, without making any observations even to myself. I have no need of knowing to obey."

He added, as if without thinking:

"I even prefer not to know."

"Ah! you see you think something!"

The old gamekeeper blushed like a young girl.

"I, madam?"

Then Frida went on:

"You just now reproached me with always thinking good of people. Now I say to you: Günther! Günther! don't think ill!"

The purity of her look and the frankness of her tones were evidence in her favour. That at least was Günther's opinion. He took into consideration that this singular appeal to his judgment and unexpected justification were the greatest honour that had ever been conferred on him in his life of poverty.

With great emotion he stammered:

"What! it is you who . . . to me—to me."

With dimmed eyes, hardly understanding what he was doing, he took one of her little hands and kissed it.

"No, no, madam, I do not believe it now."

Frida was radiant.

"Thank you, Günther," she said. "Now do

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you know what we will do? I have not enough flowers to fill all the vases, and I saw some very beautiful ones on the banks of the lake. But I could not reach them. Come with me: you shall gather them for me."

"Just as you please, madam," the old man said eagerly.

"This lake is so beautiful and so blue! so blue!"

"Yes, it is the Lady's Lake."

"Is that its name? I suppose there is a story attached to it?"

Günther signified that it was so.

"A love story?"

"Naturally."

"With death in it?"

"Yes. It is very often the same thing."

"That is true, it is often the same thing. You shall tell it to me as we walk, Günther."

CHAPTER XXV

KATE, out of breath, rushed screaming into the deserted drawing-room, with Otto at her heels. He had seen her crossing the square in Steinbach with her basket, had followed her and entered by the little park gate behind her.

She crouched in a corner pretending to defend herself, half laughing, half angry, her hair in her eyes, her corsage in revolt, and little drops of sweat on her forehead.

Otto put his arm round her waist.

"Ah! I have got you, you little wretch!"

"Leave me alone, I tell you! leave me alone!"

She called out:

"Grandfather!"

"Don't call so loudly: he will hear you."

"You are funny," she said, considering as she spoke.

He went on:

"And if he heard you he would feel himself obliged to come, and if he came I should get out of the affair: I always keep a story ready

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for occasions like this. But you would get into trouble."

"And be beaten?"

"And be beaten."

He left her and went to one of the windows.

"Fortunately your grandfather is a long way away. He is there, at the turn, with a lady. What is the lady like? Her sunshade obstructs my view. They have turned the corner: there is no one in sight now. Who is the lady?"

"That is madam."

"Madam who?"

"You are very inquisitive."

"But it does not matter to me."

He replaced one hand around her waist and with his other hand caressed her.

"Leave me alone!" the girl said, flattered by his attentions.

"Do you remember what you promised me yesterday?"

He took a box from his pocket.

"Here you are."

"What is it?"

"Look."

They were cheap jewels of a very flash kind. The method was not new; but it amused this modest maiden to play the leading part in the classic piece, "The seduction of the village maiden."

"Are they pretty?"

"Yes!"

"Then keep them."

"They are not worth the trouble: I could not wear them."

"Why?"

"Good gracious! what could I tell the old man?"

"Then we won't talk of it again."

He put the box back in his pocket.

"Don't mention it again," Kate said, with a sigh.

"Now you must go."

"In a minute."

He sat down, took her on his knees and said:

"It is a pity."

"What is a pity?"

"The result, if you continue to pass from hand to hand. . . ."

"What do you mean?"

"Among fellows who never give you a half-penny and knock you about when they are intoxicated. You see I know all about it."

"Oh! there are so many stories flying about!"

"Do you mean to insinuate that you are a modest girl? Then you will marry a dolt, work from morning till night, have a dozen children, become ugly and go about in rags."

"Ah well, quite right!" said the girl, choking.

"Fortunately there is something in your eyes which reassures me. Do you know what your eyes say?"

"What?"

"They tell me that you would rather have a nice little room at Marbourg."

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"At Marbourg!"

Kate's eyes shone. Otto went on:

"There we would live in one another's arms." He clasped her still more tightly. She feebly resisted. "Then on Sunday we would take a country walk and dine on the river-bank."

"Listening to the pretty music," she continued in sentimental tones.

"Listening to beautiful music. The little woman should have pretty dresses, hats and jewels."

Kate could not contain herself.

"Show me the box," she said.

"But your grandfather?"

"Oh! I will carefully hide them. But I shall wear them when I am alone."

"You are exquisite."

She quickly put the box in her pocket with her handkerchief on the top of it.

"Now, you must go away."

But Otto did not move.

"I have plenty of time. Besides, we are now good friends, are we not?"

He inhaled Kate's bent plump neck, which a roll of fat obliquely intersected when she turned her head, and his long nose brushed against the girl's curls.

"You are tickling me," she murmured.

"Listen, I will not go till I know when I shall see you again."

"Where will you see me? It is not a very easy matter."

"It would be easy enough, if you liked."

"If I liked. But if I do not like?"

"You won't? Why not?"

"Because it is not my idea."

"Why is it not your idea?"

"I cannot say. It would anger you."

"Go on."

She hesitated a moment, and then continued:

"Ah well! I think you are too old!"

Then, as if she had said something extraordinarily funny, she burst out laughing with an animal gaiety which shook her flesh.

Otto seized her again by the waist, pressed her slowly against him and made her look him in the face:

"You are foolish," he said; "you do not know what you are refusing."

Kate did not laugh now.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"In the lodge near the gate."

She dragged him to the window:

"There you can see a roof between the trees."

"What is that on the other side of the gate?"

"That is the stable and forage lofts."

A vision of a farmhand embracing a milkmaid in the hay, with bits of grass in her hair, and with the sensation of pointed straws pricking the skin—suddenly crossed his Highness's mind.

"Excellent that loft. Can you get out at night without awakening any one?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Can you?"

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"Still."

"What do you say to the loft?"

"Oh, sir, it would be wrong."

"But I shall marry you! Have I not told you so?"

"No, you will not marry me."

"Why?"

"Because you are of good family."

"Ah! you have guessed that, you little wretch?" he said, very much amused. "Listen: I am going to leave the park by the little gate. You left the key in the lock. I will take it with me. After nightfall I will wait for you in the loft. You will come?"

"But the old man! He is suspicious, you know. If he surprised us it would be no joking matter."

"So much the better. That will excite me."

"You are a funny fellow."

"You said so before. Will you come?"

"I cannot decide."

"Yes! yes! you will come. I am sure of it."

"You must go, sir. I am going to empty my basket and finish tidying."

She entered the dining-room, leaving the door half-open. Otto, left alone, looked around him. He was struck by the beauty of the furniture, very faded though it was, but very rich. An old consol table bore in the interlaced ornaments a shield with the arms of Marbourg on it. Everywhere, in the midst of this ancient furniture, were freshly cut flowers:

there was an air of *fête* and expectancy about the house.

"Ah!" he murmured, "where the devil am I?"

He called:

"Kate!"

"Have you not yet gone?" she answered from the next room.

"What is your mistress's name?"

"What is that to do with you?"

"Why not tell me?"

"Because you already know she is the Countess Leïloff."

"Has she lived here long?"

"Nearly four months."

Otto remembered that Frida had been absent from the Court for about four months. At the same time the recollection returned to him of the unknown lady he had seen one day in the forest whose figure was so much like Mademoiselle de Thalberg's.

"Is she alone?"

"Yes."

"Describe her."

"Not tall, but pretty! and a voice!"

"A brunette?"

"No."

"A blonde?"

"More or less."

"Alone for four months . . . not tall . . . rather a blonde . . . and a voice! No, it would be too good," he thought. "I do not deserve it, my God!"

He went on with his questioning.

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"Is she a widow?"

"No."

"Do you know her husband?"

"I have never seen him. Grandfather has seen him."

"Does he come often?"

"I do not know."

"Confess he is coming this evening."

"Why do you say that?"

"These flowers are in anticipation of some one, that is as clear as daylight."

"I do not know," the girl repeated, astonished at Otto's insistence, and suddenly becoming distrustful of him. "But will you go away?"

"Yes, my love, I will go now."

Otto went out on to the terrace, and concealing himself among the trees reached the little gate out of the park, which he forgot to lock after him.

A man was waiting with a horse at an inn at Steinbach: a retired policeman who used to accompany him at a distance in his expeditions.

Otto scribbled a few lines on the leaf of a note-book in a disguised hand, sealed it up and said to the man:

"This must be given secretly to Princess Wilhelma before night."

It seemed amusing to him to act in this way the part of the traitor in melodrama. But he reflected that he had an appointment that evening with the gamekeeper's granddaughter, and that if something was taking place in this

mysterious house, perhaps he would be too near to the scene of operation for his own peace of mind. But he quickly made up his mind.

“On the contrary, it will be more amusing. For what risk do I run? Besides, perhaps I am mistaken, and there is nothing at all. Still, we shall see. I believe, this time, I am on the track of a sensation.”

CHAPTER XXVI

FRIDA had completed the arrangement of the flowers in bunches in the great vases of Dresden china, filling them with the iris and the gladioles which she had brought in from her walk by the lake when Günther told her that the lady she expected had arrived.

Audotia entered, wearing a black dress and a black cloak. She looked thin and shrunken. Her hair was almost white and her eyes wild and ghostly.

Frida ran to kiss her. The old woman stopped her :

"First of all, swear to me," she said, "that I am not visiting a stranger, and that the maid of honour of the Princess Royal is still the generous child I knew in Paris."

"Do you doubt it, mother? "

"So it is still true that you feel pity for the oppressed? "

"With all my heart."

"That you love them better than all the world? "

"I think so."

"That you would be capable of sacrificing yourself entirely for the holy cause? "

"I hope so," Frida said, in somewhat uneasy tones.

"Then come," said the old woman.

She planted a nun's kiss upon the young girl's forehead.

"But," said Frida, "what has become of you since we separated? How did you get to Marbourg? How have you lived?"

"I have taught the children and the poor have fed me. But what does that matter? I have been able to live, since here I am. It is a very different business now!"

Rapidly, in a voice which laboured the words, she went on:

"The moment for action has come. The people have suffered so terribly that they are prepared. It has come sooner than I expected. Never will a better opportunity present itself. The people at last can touch our dream with their fingers. What is there between the dream and the reality? Hardly anything. There is only behind Prince Hermann a rickety child and the wretched Otto, who is even despised by his own family. Suppose Hermann disappears: of its own accord the throne collapses. That means revolution and a Republic as a beginning. This is what I have to tell you."

Her eyes flamed beneath her white hair. She took a revolver from beneath her cloak and put it on a table.

"The people have condemned Hermann because of the recent massacre. They count upon you to execute the sentence."

"Upon me? Upon me?"

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It was as if an ice-block had fallen upon Frida. She stammered, for she hardly understood, and was at first more stupefied than angry. This little old woman clad in black, who suddenly from the depths of the past rose up to tell her this, terrified her like an apparition. Memories flashed across her mind. She recalled her first meeting with Audotia; she remembered that this old woman had saved her from hunger, that her whole life was nothing but virtue, violent piety, forgetfulness of self and absolute sacrifice to an idea. Even at this moment it was evident that Audotia was not obeying an egoistic passion, that she was pronouncing an impersonal sentence. For this reason the sentiment Frida experienced was one of sacred horror, like that of a believer on whom the priest has imposed some frightful sacrifice.

Audotia went on :

“Do you understand?”

Yes, Frida understood, and she was white and speechless because she had understood. At last, after a violent effort, she unclenched her teeth :

“So that is your mission to me ! That is the reason of your reappearance after three years ! ”

She repeated in terror :

“For that ! For that ! ”

Audotia answered :

“In former days in Paris, do you remember ? we celebrated together the memory of our heroes and martyrs. You admired them, you honoured them in your heart, you cherished

them with tears. Now what did they do but that which the people expect of you to-day?"

"They killed tyrants because they were wicked, hateful, and the enemies of humanity. But Hermann!"

"Prince Hermann is perhaps more guilty than any of them, for he has been the most hypocritical. He has soothed the people with fine promises only to massacre them more easily, and to the cruelty of 'repression,' as it is called, he has added the perfidy of an ambushade."

While Audotia was speaking the ancient mania of suspicion and accusation common to conspirators of the people in all ages lit up her eyes with a sombre fire.

"It is not true!" the young woman cried; "it is not true! I know him well! I have never seen a more tender heart, or a more heroic good-will. I wrote to you all that, but you did not deign to reply. What he did you forced him to do, you know it very well. But you do not know the tears of blood, the performance of what he believed to be his duty, cost him. You did not desire to understand his thoughts; but that is not his fault. Think, besides, of what he did before that unfortunate day, of the hate he roused against himself before he incurred yours."

"What does it matter, even if I consent to believe you? If it is not his will that is evil, it is then his office. So much the worse for him! Men like him, with their half-formed ideas and their inclinations for justice which run counter to the necessities and the irresist-

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ible prejudices of their position, are more dangerous to us than avowed despots, for they can prolong by the false hopes they give to the simple and timid the ignominy of the old world. But I repeat to you, Prince Hermann is condemned. I anticipated your trouble and your resistance at first. Nevertheless I reckoned upon you. Tell me if I am mistaken."

Frida felt a desire to cry out: "Truly you are mistaken, and your orders are infamous!" But before this face of stone, which betokened a superhuman will and something like a long callousness in heroism, she felt ashamed and restrained herself: she dared not yet allow her feeble heart to speak, nor give the real reason for her tearful weakness.

"So," she said, "when you sent me here it was for murder and treason!"

"All glorious murderers, all those who have saved cities or freed races, have been traitors."

"But Hermann has pardoned you!"

"That was a trap."

"Just lately again he spared you. It was through him your last sentence was so light. He has never been unkind to you."

"Ah! do you believe that I think of myself?"

"Alas! you, too, whom I have seen so good to the weak and afflicted, so compassionate to women and children."

"It is of those I am thinking to-day."

Frida, in her weariness, felt that she would be worsted in this battle of words. Her throat contracted. Suddenly her whole heart burst out in this cry:

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"No! no! go away! It is too cowardly, indeed it is too cowardly!"

The old woman answered her gently:

"Murder is not cowardly when it is eternal justice and eternal love which inspire it, when the death-dealing hand is disinterested, and when, besides, the blow is swift and unexpected and does not add suffering to death. Murder is not cowardly when ~~beforehand~~ the murderer has made a sacrifice of his life. My own life is of no value to me."

She went on, in a more bitter tone:

"Ah! ah! it is easy and charming to love justice and to pity the oppressed when it is merely a question of dreams and fine words. You thought they would last for ever, so when the time comes to put your hand to the task for the good cause and kill or die it appears to you hard, makes you disgusted and causes your tender heart to revolt. Ah! ah! which of us two is the coward?"

"Go away!" Frida retorted. "Go away!"

The old woman did not move. But her voice became less hard:

"Do you obstinately refuse, Frida?"

"Ah! yes, I refuse."

"Then come with me."

"With you?"

"Yes, with me. Friends await us not far away, at the inn at the junction of the Steinbach and Kirchdorf roads. I believed you were stronger. Do not speak of it again. But since your heart fails you before the accomplishment of what we expected of you, you are of no use here."

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"But-

"Did you then think that because I have been able to endure separation from you, from you, my dearest daughter, and because I sent you to that wretched Court, it was to spend a useless life in luxury and idleness while your brethren were dying of hunger? Have you, in fact, the soul of a maid of honour? Come, come, my child. Prince Hermann must not find you here."

Frida covered her face with her hands and said through her tears :

"I love him ! "

The white-haired virgin trembled with rage.

"Ah ! you have let slip the great word ! You love him ! That is the reason of your presence here. A wretched love adventure, so that is the end of all your beautiful thoughts, magnanimous projects, and the forgotten cult of your grandfather the martyr ! You love the Prince ! What a fine reason ! What is that to do with us ? What did I tell you about love ? Love is no longer necessary. One must not love a person, for love is living only for that person, and living only for that person is to live only for self. Ah ! ah ! I know your dirty love affairs, you cowards, you egoists ! • You must love men. Love as you understand it is a robbery from humanity."

But Frida repeated :

"I love him ! "

"Then good-bye."

Audotia took great strides to the door. On the threshold she turned and lifted her hand, as if about to utter a curse :

"Mademoiselle de Thalberg, the granddaughter of Kariskine, who died in prison, can see to-day before her no better destiny than to be the mistress of a murderer of the people, and in the name of the twelve hundred massacred by the orders of the Prince Royal, I declare you——"

Frida threw herself upon her, forced her to lower her raised arm, and cried in distress :

"Mother ! mother ! I will obey you. Listen to me ! I will obey you. You desire, do you not, that the Prince disappears so that revolution may be possible ? But as long as he disappears you do not insist upon his death, and you cannot insist upon the murder of my friend ? Yes, it is true that I love him. Not in the way you think I do, but because he has at heart the same ideas as yourself, and perhaps there is some merit in that. But I am not his mistress, I swear to you ! Only I adore him and would rather die than leave him. Ah, well, if he loved me well enough, or were so disgusted with his *rôle* that he were to renounce his power, his throne, everything (I am not mad, you will see !), if I decided him to abandon everything and go away with me to-morrow, this evening, should I not deserve your forgiveness ? Should I not have laboured for the cause ? For you say it is not the man you hate : it is the Prince. Allow me to make the attempt, and do not curse me till afterwards."

There was so much enthusiasm and sincerity in Frida's tones, her clear eyes showed so clearly her candid and tortured soul, that the

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old woman for a moment softened, and placed her hand in a motherly way upon the young girl's forehead and golden hair :

"Poor little one !" she murmured.

Then once more turned to stone she continued :

"Very well ; I will wait. But if you fail in your task and remain here, understand, Frida, that you will be the vilest of creatures. With the Prince or without him you must come back to us. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXVII

GÜNTHER lit the lamp.

"Do you require me any longer, madam?"

"No, Günther."

"Good-evening and good-night, madam."

"Good-night!"

Frida sat down to the piano and played an air of Schumann's slowly and with fingers which hardly touched on the keys. Outside the night was soft; it was bright moonlight, and fresh puffs of the odour of the verdure came to Frida through the half-open window.

The music filled in the moments of her waiting, and so shortened them. In low tones, with an accompaniment as light as the rustle of wings, she was singing an air from *Tannhauser*, when Prince Hermann entered. She ran to him and took his cloak from him. He wished to embrace her, but she took his hands and covered them with kisses. Then she dragged him to that corner of the drawing-room lit by the lamp standing on a table, made him sit upon the couch, and seated herself on a low chair at his feet.

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"My God!" she said, "how pale you are! Are you ill?"

"No; I am glad to be here. Here I feel at home, and I am happy."

But he hesitated as he said it, and his eyes were full of fever. He tried to smile.

"What have you been doing, Frida, every day while you were waiting for me?"

"Well, I have waited for you. That is an occupation sufficient to take up my days, I assure you. And you?"

"You know, Frida, what I have done."

"Poor friend! I have pitied you with all my heart. You must have suffered so!"

"It is not yet ended, Frida. I have begun: I must go on to the end. I have only succeeded in stemming the tide of anger and terrifying distress which continue to mutter angrily. I maintain public order by fear, as if I were a tyrant. If the smouldering fire one day bursts into flame again, well, we shall slaughter once more; it is only the first bloodshed which costs."

"Oh! not that, Hermann! Not that!"

Like a suppliant she stretched out her two hands towards Hermann's mouth, as if to stop his cruel words. But he went on, without looking at her:

"Then what? What am I to do? Not to doubt my duty and perform it without trouble, I should require the soul of the hardest of my stern ancestors, and I have but a poor tender heart, which other people's sorrow moves to

its depths, and a poor uneasy spirit, which is not even certain that what I have to defend is worth the cost of its defence. I am tormented with uncertainty and overwhelmed with secret sorrow in a position which excludes doubt and pity. Ah! I am a very bad protector of order, for I am tempted to forgive the wretches everything and hate those whom they threaten. Among the congratulations I received in those days, some made my heart sick. I have an admiration for men who are capable of judging, condemning, and having others executed, of taking this upon themselves and afterwards sleeping. In me is an entire separation between thought which is free and action which is forced. That is lamentable. That in a Prince is called cowardice. The most indulgent will call it weakness. Yet God knows what will-power I had to exercise to succeed in appearing the weakest of men!"

Frida got up and kissed Hermann on the forehead.

He went on :

"When I saw my father the other evening (I do not know whether he understood what has taken place just lately, for he is very feeble and hardly ever speaks), he only repeated the words he uttered on the day he delegated his power to me: 'My son, may God give you faith!' Alas! I have torn the veil of illusion which sovereigns have before their eyes. The deeds of my ancestors, for which they have been glorified, have often filled me with doubt

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and fear. The faith in which my father lived I have never had, and that faith in which I should have liked to live I fear I have no longer. Perhaps there is nothing to be done for the people; nothing is of use; and the ancient expression 'all is vanity' has a precise, terrible, desperate meaning in the complete interpretation one never dares to place on it."

"I love you," Frida said.

She got up and enveloped Hermann, like a sick child, with her two slight arms, a thing she had never done before.

A gust of wind passed through the trees. They could hear a long rustling of leaves spread from tree to tree, growing as it went. An owl called. The flame of the lamp rose very high, and then burned low. Hermann and Frida at the same time had a feeling of unutterable distress, in which their dreams vanished, and they could hardly retain the beautiful, foolish ideas by which they had believed themselves almost uniquely attached: soon they were nothing more than two amorous bodies seeking one another in the solitude with ardent sorrow.

"I live," Hermann said, "only for you. The anguish, of which I have made a pitiable confession, arises in some degree from you. Therefore you alone can appease it. Oh! have pity on me, for I am more deserted, more lonely than the beggar on the highway. Oh! your voice . . . your eyes . . . your mouth! The

sweetness of caressing your hair, of resting on your breast, of feeling you are mine, all mine, are you not?"

"Hermann!"

He seized her slender wrists, and as on her knees she leant backwards, he leant over her, over her forehead with its halo of red gold, over her eyes of the colour of the lakes in which the fresh grass is reflected, over the little teeth shining so between her parted lips.

"Do you not see that I need your kiss and that you must free me from my promise? Some people who saw us would take us for lovers. Why do we conceal ourselves? Would you not be already damned in the eyes of the Pharisees for what you have done for me? Frida, in the name of my sorrow, do not repulse me to-day."

She freed herself by a movement in which a virgin instinct survived, although her will had departed. She unclasped her lover's hands without anger: she looked at the man's pale, sad face, his fine skin, straight brows, his agitated mouth and his lower lip, projecting a little and slightly wrinkled. She seemed to see these things for the first time, and she understood they were the things she loved.

She made an effort to remember where they were, and suddenly thought of her promise to Audotia. But although Audotia then appeared to her very far distant, she told herself that she must fulfil her promise, and also that the means by which she could do so were those which

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would deliver up to her, and her alone, for ever the man she adored. So a little feminine cunning was mingled with the sincere resistance of her shame, and perhaps, too, of her suddenly awakened jealousy concerning the Princess, and she could not have said whether she enlisted this ruse in the service of her love or her duty, as the old woman had instructed her in it.

"Hermann," she replied, "my whole heart belongs to you, and I am your servant; but do not ask that if you love me."

"I love you and I desire you. Are you not my true wife, the companion of my mind and heart? Do you doubt me? Must I swear to you?"

"No, Hermann. But how can I tell you? It seems to me that afterwards I should find myself bound to you by another tie than my will, and in that way I should be less yours, as I should belong to you less freely. Then you have just said we hide ourselves like the guilty; in coming here I deceive my great-uncle, for he thinks I am with a friend, whom I also compel to lie. We live in deceit: that is enough. I do not desire to live in treachery. That would bring us misfortune."

"The woman of whom you are thinking, Frida, will suffer no more if you are a little more to me. Must she not even now believe herself deceived? Whether true or not, it is all the same to her."

"But not to me, Hermann. I want her to

hate me, or even despise me, but I do not desire to give her the right to do so. I consent to be vilified in her thoughts, but not in my own. What she believes is of no consequence; but I will not feel myself sink in my own estimation before her."

"Alas! Frida, you do not love me."

"I love you, Hermann, but I cannot be the rival in shame of the Princess de Marbourg."

"No, you do not love me. That, too, when I have no one but you, when on your account I have repudiated all the other reasons that I had to live. For, you see, I am nothing but a poor grief-stricken and bewildered creature, in revolt against himself, against his *rôle* and his natural destiny. The blood which flows in my veins is weary, without doubt, from the excess of pride and action of so many royal generations, and I languish with the fatigue of all these reigns. I shall be always, always unhappy. Ah! how I hate what they call my duty! How I hate my royal function! How I hate my whole life, everything except you!"

The lamp, the shade of which had slipped, left the greater part of the drawing-room in a half-light, so that if Hermann and Frida had been attentive to anything but themselves they might have distinguished behind the lighted window a vague black form walking slowly.

Hermann was overwhelmed, and kept silent. Frida felt that she had led him to the point she desired, and getting up:

"You are quite sure of what you are say-

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ing? You are not mistaken? Are you not deceiving yourself?"

"Alas!"

"God be praised!" she cried. "If you suffer so, the remedy is easy. Leave it all, free yourself; be a man only, and you will no longer be a Prince. Only then will you cease to suffer. See what an example and lesson it will be: a Prince going away because he recognizes the impossibility of reigning without doing harm. In that way you will help the holy cause more than by anything you could attempt if you remained in power. For a Prince, whatever he does, is but a sentinel of injustice. Then you will be happy, for you will no longer be responsible for the abominations of the old world. Think! is it not monstrous in the case of the planet Terra that the men scattered over its surface cannot, after ten thousand years, all live, and that there are such odious inequalities of distribution among its nurslings? Of what are you afraid? Go; the ancient order prevents less violence than it consecrates iniquities: therefore it is nothing more than a long, a terrible mistake, and as all parties cling to it, amelioration is impossible: it must be entirely renewed, and that can only come about through enunciations like ours, or the inevitable violence of the disinherited masses. Perhaps you think the new order of things will be no better? What do you know of it? All the same, every one in their turn! would already be a rough formula of justice. But I have con-

fidence: the world of the future will be better because it will be different. I cannot explain to you, but I have friends who know. Come, we shall be doing good; we will live near to nature, not far from the humble, among whom are the truly great. For myself, until the day I met you, I have never been better nor so happy as when I lived by my work and rubbed shoulders with the poor. Come, come; at last you will know the joy of a soul at liberty, and therefore fraternal to the rest of the world. If I have not been able to be the mistress of the Prince of Marbourg, then I shall belong to you, my Hermann! Tell me, do you agree?"

In this way the past dreams of her soul spoke through Frida's ardent lips. She believed she had conciliated her faith and love; but her young blood murmured in her: "I love you alone, and I will love you unconditionally if you please, for I am vanquished. I love you though you are a Prince, and even though you were the most haughty of tyrants I should always love you, and I could not do otherwise."

She dared not say it aloud; she would have believed herself committing blasphemy. Perhaps, too, she did not yet admit that this blasphemy was in her heart. Only she knelt down again at Hermann's feet, and throwing her arms around her friend's neck, she drew him silently towards her lips.

At that moment a woman clad in black entered by the door from the terrace.

The revolver dimly gleamed in the semi-

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darkness of the drawing-room upon the table where Audotia Latanief had placed it.

About the same time, in his search for novel sensations, Prince Otto glided to the place of meeting where the gamekeeper's granddaughter awaited him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE next morning the following paragraphs appeared in the Marbourg newspapers :

"A terrible mourning, a double mourning has stricken the royal house and the whole of the kingdom of Alfania.

"Yesterday, Saturday, about six in the morning, a market gardener of Steinbach found in a ditch by the side of the road which skirts the park of Orsova, the body of a tall man, still young, wearing a hunting dress. He at once informed the mayor of Steinbach, who wired to Loewenbrunn. The superintendent of police, on reaching the spot with his men, recognized that the victim was none other than his Royal Highness Prince Otto. The Prince had been struck by a bullet, which had penetrated beneath the left arm. Death must have been instantaneous.

"Tracks of footsteps and trampled grass led to the park gate. Other tracks led across the garden, nearly to the stables. It was evidently there that the murder had been committed.

"First of all Günther the gamekeeper and his granddaughter were questioned. They declared that they had seen or heard nothing.

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"Afterwards the police entered the villa to question the lady residing there, a Countess Leïloff, who had lived a very retired life at Orsova for a few months only. The house was deserted. But in a corner of the drawing-room, at the foot of a couch, lay the body of his Royal Highness Prince Hermann with a bullet through his heart.

"The Countess Leïloff had disappeared.

"Questioned once more, the gamekeeper and his granddaughter repeated that they knew nothing, that the previous evening they had not left their beds, which were at the lodge about fifty metres from the stables, and that no noise had warned them of what was taking place. Nevertheless, they were both put under arrest.

"The chief of the royal police hurried to Orsova to make a minute investigation.

"The greatest mystery shrouds this frightful affair. Certain clues hold out hope that the murderer or murderers will not long be at liberty.

"No one has yet dared to break the terrible news to his Majesty the King, who is confined by a terrible malady and old age, as every one knows, to his palace at Loewenbrunn, where his unfortunate sons had lately joined him."

CHAPTER XXIX

A FEW days after his arrival at Loewenbrunn a second attack of paralysis had completely prostrated the old King, and since then his tongue had been fettered, his limbs drawn, and his thoughts absent or sleeping; he was like a man already removed from the world of the living. He had been told briefly of events at Marbourg, the proceedings of the assembly, the demonstration of the 1st of October, and what had followed it. But he did not appear to understand what was said to him. Only from time to time he inquired after the health of little Wilhelm.

His sole pleasure was to eat like a greedy child and when the weather was fine to be taken in his wheeled chair beneath the trees in the great avenue. For hours he gazed at the decoration of the palace, the long colonnades of its façade, the majestic appearance of its fountains, and its avenues made for royal cortèges, the stately sweep of the winding slopes and steps which joined together the various terraces, the enormous circle of the noble marble statues gilded by the sun or striped by the dust and rain, the broad openings of the lofty avenues diverging like the

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rays of a star, and at the centre the colossal equestrian statue of Hermann II, his terrible ancestor. The old King gazed at this as if he had never seen it before, without a doubt to carry away in death a vision of the ancient glory of his race; and sometimes a shrill cry like that of a little child interrupted his vague ecstasy.

He very rarely asked to see the Princes his sons. Princess Wilhelma, whose soul he knew was more like his own, was the only person whose presence he appeared to love.

That day he was in his room, his legs enveloped in rugs, watching from the window the rain stream from the shoulders of bronze Hermann II, and cover with a veil of desolation the pompous assembly of marbles and the high walls. When Wilhelma approached he saw she was so pale and troubled that he shook off his torpor and anxiety brightened his dim eyes.

She understood.

"Your grandson is very well," she said. "It is not concerning him, but your two sons, I must tell you."

She hesitated, choosing her words.

"You must be told what has happened. God afflicts us, father."

Tears came into her eyes. The old man, his face tense with a great effort and his tongue still fettered, asked:

"Hermann?"

Wilhelma wished to speak but could not. She broke down and sobbed at the old King's side.

The sick man's eyes gradually brightened; upon the arm of the couch his knotted fingers slowly moved; a great effort traversed his paralyzed limbs. Apparently under the sudden shock of a tragic idea his intelligence was set going; at the first glance he had conceived as present and real all possible misfortune, and having realized it, the emotion he had experienced had communicated to the whole of his body a saving tremor, in such a way that the horror of the things he imagined was accompanied in him by the feeling and involuntary joy of a little returned life.

His tongue became partially unfettered, he was able to articulate :

"So it is a worse misfortune I must expect? "

Wilhelma did not reply.

Then the old man distinctly said :

"In the actual state of the kingdom, even the death of my sons would not perhaps be the worse misfortune."

CHAPTER XXX

ON the following day Christian XVI, in his invalid's chair, presided over a council of ministers. His condition was improved, he could move his fingers and forearm, and although his voice remained weak and his tongue heavy, he could speak in a way to make himself understood. His strong will, awakened by the necessity of a pressing duty, sustained his moribund body.

"God tries me, gentlemen, and in every way. In the retreat where I was waiting for my last rest He has struck me the hardest blows which can touch a father and a King, and it seems as if it has postponed my death and brought back to me a shadow of life, so that I may the better feel the weight of His hand. But let us do our duty."

He complimented General de Kersten upon his energetic measures, suspended twelve newspapers, ordered the quarters of the chiefs of the various revolutionary parties to be searched, put some of the ringleaders in prison and confined to barracks till further orders, the garrison of Marbourg.

Then he declared that the new House would be elected and assemble with the least possible delay. "In consideration of the bad times" he made this considerable sacrifice to the "new ideas," and he did not consider it wise to exercise his authority as a sovereign to undo what had been done by his eldest son. He entrusted the Count de Moellnitz with the formation of a new ministry. As soon as this ministry was constituted, the King would abdicate in favour of his grandson.

Then he vigorously pushed on the inquiries concerning the affair at Orsova. This mystery gripped the public. The King had first reckoned that the death of the two Princes, especially seeing that one was despised and the other had become unpopular, would produce a great movement of pity and indignation, which would benefit the royal cause and the Conservative interest. In reality, after the first emotion had subsided, the people experienced a feeling of idle curiosity, and in the double regicide saw nothing more than an exceptional incident; but the effect of this curiosity was precisely what the King had expected of the other sentiment. The whole of Alfania for a fortnight forgot political and social questions and left the Government almost in peace.

Either from cleverness or conviction the King had started the idea of the Socialist trap, and the inquiry was directed from this preconceived idea. The facts at first seemed to favour it. But they could not be revealed to the public without at the same time disclosing

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secret particulars of the lives of the two Princes, nor could the enemies of the State be denounced without making known the private weaknesses of their victims. The King unhesitatingly consented to the half raising of the veils, persuaded that a higher interest commanded him to brave in the circumstances the injurious indiscretion of public comment.

The Marbourg papers then published the following paragraphs :

“Investigations concerning the Orsova affair have made a great stride. It has already been stated that the château was inhabited by a Countess Leïloff, who has since disappeared. It has now been proved that the Countess Leïloff was none other than Mademoiselle Frida de Thalberg, maid of honour of her Royal Highness Princess Wilhelma. Prince Hermann displayed great sympathy for Mademoiselle de Thalberg, a sympathy, too, quite easy to understand when the fact is taken into consideration that this girl was the grandniece of the Marquis de Frauenlaub, the Prince's former tutor, and had quarrelled with her great-uncle and taken refuge in Paris with her mother, where Prince Hermann had met her, reconciled her with her old relative, and introduced her to the Court. He had for her that affection which is often felt by persons for those to whom they have rendered great services. He was ignorant of the fact, or wished to forget, that Mademoiselle de Thalberg was the granddaughter of the conspirator Kariskine, that she had associated in Paris with the notorious Audotia

Latanief, and that she had remained imbued, even in her new position, with the most perverse ideas.

"Mademoiselle de Thalberg, whose health was frail, was installed about four months ago, through her great-uncle's kindness, in the Château of Orsova, in the midst of the forest of Steinbach, to take an air cure. Why did she assume the name of Countess Leïloff? This detail is only explicable by a taste for mystery dear to all conspirators. It appears certain that before the fatal night Prince Hermann, with that exquisite kindness for which he was famous, had come once or twice to inquire after the invalid.

"His Royal Highness had badly placed his affection. It is now evident that Frida, who had preserved her relations with the most advanced sections of the Socialist party, in cowardly fashion betrayed her royal protector, and enticed him under some pretext or another to the Château of Orsova to hand him over to his assassins. Among Mademoiselle de Thalberg's papers a letter was discovered from Audotia Latanief fixing the day on which the two crimes were committed for her visit.

"Every effort is being made to find Frida de Thalberg and Audotia Latanief.

"The evidence against Audotia Latanief is increasing. The revolver found beneath a piece of furniture in the drawing-room has been recognized by a Marbourg gunmaker as having

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been sold by him a fortnight ago to a woman answering the description of Audotia Latanief. A woman also answering her description was seen on the day of the crime about three o'clock in the afternoon at a lonely inn on the forest road from Kirchdorf to Steinbach.

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"Audotia Latanief was arrested yesterday evening in the furnished rooms she occupied in Marbourg, in the Ruc des Saulaies, where she had been so imprudent as to return. She offered no resistance to the officers, and simply said: 'I expected you: very well.' When questioned by the magistrate she displayed the most odious cynicism. She admitted that she visited Mademoiselle de Thalberg the day of the crime, and that the revolver found in the drawing-room was her property. She added that she approved of the assassination of Prince Hermann, but denied that she was the author of the crime. Towards the end of the examination she begged for news of her young friend, and as she received no answer to her request, she burst into tears.

"Up to the present no trace has been found of Frida de Thalberg.

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"It seems evident, in spite of Audotia's denials, which are so incompatible with her partial confessions, that it was she who assassinated Prince Hermann. Did she have any other accomplices besides Frida? That will soon be

known, for those of the leaders of the revolutionary party who were particularly associated with Audotia have been arrested.

"As regards Prince Otto, it is most probable that his murderer was no other than the gamekeeper Günther. The antecedents of the old soldier are irreproachable; but he was devoted body and soul to Mademoiselle de Thalberg, and it is not impossible that on this occasion he extended his obedience even to the extent of committing crime. Besides, he was perhaps unaware of the name of the victim pointed out to him.

"The bullet which struck Prince Otto is of the same size as the gun the gamekeeper usually used. No blood-stains were found on Günther's clothes, although he must have dragged his victim's body more than a hundred metres from the spot where he fell. But the wound in Prince Otto bled little, and besides, Günther had all night to dispose of the clothes he was wearing at the time of the murder.

"According to the opinions of the doctors, Prince Otto's death must have taken place after his brother's. It is supposed that Prince Otto succeeded in escaping from the fatal house and that Günther, who was on guard outside, shot him while he was running across the garden.

"But by what means could Prince Otto have been attracted at that late hour to this lonely house? It must not be forgotten that the Prince, who was simplicity itself, loved following the example of his grandfather Christian

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XII the well-beloved, to secretly mingle with the crowd, and sometimes in this way had innocent adventures. It has been discovered that on the previous evening he had assisted incognito at the public rejoicings of the feast at Steinbach, and that he had there become acquainted with the gamckeeper's granddaughter. Add to this the fact that her morals were notoriously deplorable. What trap could this girl's cunning have set for the indulgent good-nature of the Prince? That is not yet known.

"Up to the present, Günther and Kate have remained as dumb as beasts. It is to be hoped that solitary confinement will dispel this obstinacy.

"There is serious reason to think that Frida de Thalberg has taken refuge in London or Paris."

Such was the official interpretation of the Orsova mystery. It only half satisfied the old King. The theory of the Socialist trap bore examination very badly, and gave rise to many objections when details were considered. Perhaps the melodramatic coincidence of the two murders was after all the result of chance? In that case each murder would have to be explained separately. Christian had tried to believe that Audotia had spoken the truth when she denied the assassination of Prince Hermann. What interest had she in persisting in denials which would not save her head, since she admitted herself an accomplice in fact and in desire, and that would suffice to condemn her

to death? On the other hand, the correspondence between Frida and Hermann, which the King had in his hands, dispelled the idea that Mademoiselle de Thalberg had killed her platonic lover through revolutionary fanaticism. But from all appearance she was the assassin. Must it be supposed that Frida was seized with a fit of murderous jealousy? Or had Hermann, worn out with the spirituality of this liaison, tried to do violence to his friend, and had that strange girl defended her virtue from the man she adored with revolver shots?

Otto's murder was more easily explained. The King knew the private habits of his younger son and his taste for vulgar adventures. A bullet fired by some lover, a farm-hand or groom, might very well have hit him as he was returning from a sordid rendezvous with the gamekeeper's granddaughter. In that case there was no connection between the two deaths except the extraordinary coincidence of time and place. But if this combination was not the result of human machinations, the pious sovereign was quite ready to recognize in it the intervention of a divine will whose designs he adored. It was to conform to this idea that he kept his suppositions to himself and maintained energetically an inquiry in the direction he had first of all indicated. Assuredly Providence had allowed the death of the two Princes to furnish him with arms against the enemies of society, and to preserve what the weakness and unworthiness of his sons had so seriously compromised.

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Now Audotia in prison was very unhappy. She was persuaded that Frida had killed Prince Hermann, and she blessed and glorified her in her heart. But at the same time she could not console herself for her loss. She discovered in herself a mother's love, the depth of which she had not previously suspected, and for the first time the fear that she loved a person as much as she did humanity came into her heart.

The night following her visit to Orsova and all the next day she had vainly awaited her young friend. The news of the double murder had at first filled her with joy: she believed the people ready to seize this opportunity to revolt and proclaim the Republic. But she reckoned without the resurrection of Christian XVI. On her return to Marbourg she had found the party wavering, intimidated by the vigorous measures which the old King had taken, and the majority of the people amused by this famous crime as by a popular novel, and more curious to follow day by day the chain of events in this mysterious affair than disposed to profit by it to obtain their own freedom.

So the heroic act of the child of her soul, and perhaps her death (for she had very little doubt now about Frida's suicide) were going to be useless in the sacred cause! The thought that Frida had died through her, and died in vain, tortured her! Her faith was not shaken: if the time had not yet come, nothing was more certain than that it would come. But she felt

herself stricken to the heart, and had no longer the courage to act. That was why one evening, not desperate, but horribly weary, she had returned to her room to await the coming of the police.

In her cell she passed her time in knitting stockings and little woollen skirts for the children of the prisoners.

CHAPTER XXXI

CHRISTIAN XVI had an idea. The service record of the gamekeeper Günther (three campaigns, four wounds, two mentions in dispatches, not for bravery in the heat of the battle, but for coolly and obstinately carrying out orders), and last of all, the high estimation in which he was held in the villages where he had lived since he had left the army, persuaded the King that Günther was a brave man, very straightforward, very honest, very respectable to the countless powers to which a poor man owes obeisance, and that he had only to question him in a particular way to find out the truth.

The King instructed the Chief of Police to have Günther and Kate brought to him, so that he might question them himself.

The official objected that such a course was contrary to custom. But the King remarked that he was the King, and that his powers were not limited by any written constitution, as Alfania enjoyed the benefits of absolute monarchy.

So one morning a carriage brought Günther and Kate to the Palace. The gendarmes left them at the door of the royal study.

"Come here, Günther. You too, made-moiselle; do not be afraid."

They were not frightened. They were only very much surprised, and required a little time to realize that this old man, stooping from age, enveloped in a dressing-gown, with his feet wrapped in furs, was in reality the King.

"I know, Günther, that you are a man of honour, that you have been a soldier many years and served your country faithfully. Perhaps you have concealed something from the magistrate. That is the reason I wished to see you. But you must tell me everything. See, I am not setting a trap for you. I am questioning you in front of your granddaughter, and I will also question her in your presence. In that way it will be easy for both of you to deceive me if you wish to do so. But I am sure you will tell me the truth, whatever it may be. Speak: the King is listening to you."

Günther's big moustache trembled with emotion. Kate, at first impressed by the magnificence of the room, and now almost amused, looked with lowered eyes beneath the furniture and tapestry.

"Sire," Günther said, "I should be an utter scoundrel if I did not speak before you with the same sincerity as at the Last Judgment."

"You are accused," the King said, "of killing Prince Otto, perhaps in ignorance of his identity, and that point is in your favour. You are accused of killing him by the orders of Frida de Thalberg, to whom you were entirely devoted."

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"Sire," the old soldier replied, "it is true that I was devoted to madam, but not to the extent of doing wrong, nor, besides, would she ever have ordered me to do such a thing. This is what happened. In the night of Friday, about ten o'clock, I heard a noise of footsteps, the sound of some one walking cautiously. I got up; but before going out it occurred to me to look in my granddaughter's room, where I discovered she was not in her bed."

Kate protested stubbornly :

"I was not in my bed? "

"No! "

"How can you say such a thing! "

"Be quiet," the old man said, "and do not lie."

"And afterwards? " the King asked.

"I went out with my gun. I saw a man upon the ladder up to the loft. I called out : ' Who's that? ' He made no answer, and started to come down very quickly. I thought : ' Either he is a lover, or a thief, or a man spying upon the Prince Royal. In either of the three cases there is only one thing for me to do.' So I fired. The man fell. He got up and dragged himself toward the trees. I followed him and picked him up dead."

"Did you recognize him at that moment? "

"Sire, I will tell you everything. The moon was full : I was able to scrutinize the dead man's face, and I had a suspicion that he was his Royal Highness Prince Otto. That is the reason I refused to answer questions."

"Out of fear? "

"No, sire : out of respect."

"And then?"

"Then I only had one idea, which was to carry the body as far away as possible. But my strength failed me: I left it by the side of the park wall, where it was discovered on the following morning. I put away the ladder and returned to the house. I found Kate in her bed. I beat her; I told her what I thought of her for making me kill a man. Then I waited for daylight."

"What took place in the château; what do you know of that?"

"Nothing, sire."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing at all."

"Did you not hear anything?"

"Absolutely nothing, sire. My lodge is more than a hundred yards from the château, and is separated from it by a clump of thick trees."

"But that evening did you notice anything?"

"Madam was very pleased because she expected a friend. She passed her time gathering flowers and decorating the drawing-room with them."

"Did she not receive a visitor?"

"Yes, sire; an old lady in black."

"Audotia Latanief. At what time?"

"About four o'clock, sire."

"Did you see the woman leave?"

"Yes, sire."

"Are you sure she went out of the park?"

"Yes, sire. I opened the gate for her."

"Do you think that Frida de Thalberg was capable of killing Prince Hermann?"

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"Oh! sire. She loved him as a saint loves God."

"But there are women who kill because they love."

"Madam did not love after that fashion, sire."

The King turned towards Kate :

"Now, mademoiselle, what have you to say? "

"Nothing, sire."

"Little wretch!" Günther growled. "Speak when the King questions you."

"Do not bully her, Günther. Answer, mademoiselle. Where did you meet Prince Otto? "

Günther interposed :

"At the *fête* at Steinbach, sire."

"Let her speak, Günther."

Kate made up her mind :

"Well, yes, there! Is it my fault? Did I know that he was a Prince? "

"When did you see him again? "

"The following day, as I returned from Steinbach, he followed me, and entered the château after me. There was no one there just then. He promised me things, and he told me to meet him at night in the hayloft. That is all."

"But how could he get in? "

"I had forgotten the key of the little park postern. He took it away."

"But did you see no one in the garden or around the château when you went to this rendezvous? "

"I did not go, sire."

"You did not go? "

"No, sire."

She replied with quick motions of the head. She seemed again quite determined, either from obstinacy or from a vague fear of the consequences of her admissions.

The King said to her :

"Take great care. If you conceal anything, you will be thought to be more guilty than you really are. Now everything is discovered. Besides, my child, the King is questioning you, and the King is not your enemy. So have you nothing to add?"

"No, sire."

Christian tried a subterfuge :

"Your examination is therefore concluded, and I have found out what I wished to know. Mademoiselle was arrested yesterday. Your answers sentence her to death, for the result of them is that I am convinced she really killed Prince Hermann."

The vision of Frida hanging with protruding tongue, in the attitude shown in pictures of the execution of criminals, and at the same moment the recollection of her graciousness, goodness, of the candour with which she defended Kate and the gentle phrases she used, phrases like : "Kate is a modest girl. You must not think ill of her, Günther. You are too hard upon her," softened the girl's heart, and she cried out :

"It is not true, sire !"

"How do you know?" the King asked.

"I will tell the whole truth from the beginning." She remembered Otto's questions, the way in which he had inspected the drawing-

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room, and suddenly the impression came to her that his curiosity was that of an enemy, and that there was a mysterious connection between Otto's visit and Hermann's death.

"When Prince Otto came," she said, "he stayed in the drawing-room while I tidied the dining-room, and looked carefully round. Then he asked me the lady's name and what she was like. I told him it : I did not think I was doing any harm. Then he asked me if she was expecting the Count. How was I to know that he was a Prince? Still I began to distrust him, and I told him that it was no business of his. But as there were flowers everywhere, he said : 'These flowers show that some one is expected : that is as clear as daylight.' Then he went away."

The King was lost in thought, his head bowed still lower by a fear of the things he foresaw. His poor knotted hands trembled more strongly on his knees.

"Is that all, my child? "

"No," the girl said. "There is something else; at the moment I went out to keep the appointment——"

"You admit you went? "

"Yes, sire."

"You found Prince Otto there? "

"Yes, sire."

"Did he speak again of Countess Leïloff? "

"No, sire."

"Was he gay? "

"Very gay, sire."

"Were you his mistress? "

Kate bent her head and blushed. The King

thought of Princess Gertrude, who had been ill so long. He said in the kindest tones :

"Continue, poor child."

"When I went out," the girl said, "I saw upon the terrace of the château a woman all in black."

"Why did you not say so, Kate?"

"Because I had begun by saying I had not left my bed, and that would have contradicted that statement."

"Are you sure that the woman you saw was not Frida de Thalberg?"

"I am quite sure."

"Was it the old woman who had visited Mademoiselle during the day?"

"No, sire. The woman I saw was taller. Besides, she was not old. And then——"

"And then?"

"For a moment she turned, and as the moon shone full upon her——"

"Could you recognize her?"

"I was too far away, sire. I do not know. But——"

The chamberlain announced Princess Wilhelma. It was the time she came every morning to inquire after the King's health.

Kate, seeing her enter, had a surprising shock. She was about to cry out: "That is the woman!" when Günther seized her wrist and violently ordered her :

"Be silent!"

But the King had understood, and while Kate fixed her staring eyes upon the Princess :

"I am going," he said to Günther, "to have you set at liberty, you and your granddaughter.

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You will set out to-morrow for our Château d'Eberbach, which is a hundred and twenty leagues from here, where you will occupy the position of head gamekeeper. You will forget all you have seen, and you will answer to me for your granddaughter's silence."

Then to Kate :

"Go, my child, and try to be modest."

The prisoners were taken away. The King gazed long at his daughter-in-law. She returned his look, but her disdainful Marie Antoinette lip trembled a little.

At that moment the Ministers arrived for the Council. With the utmost calmness the King said to them, pointing to Wilhelma :

"Gentlemen, the Princess Regent ! "

CHAPTER XXXII

HE presided over the Council with great lucidity, and developed a plan for the very powerful organisation of the official candidatures for the forthcoming elections.

Afterwards he sent for the Princess :

"Madam, have you nothing to tell me? "

"But surely it is you, sire? " Wilhelma stammered. "Have those people you sent for, who were, I understand, the gamekeeper Günther and his granddaughter, told you anything new? "

"It is my place to question you. Have you nothing to tell me, madam? "

"I? "

He went on more imperiously :

"Madam, I am your father and your King. I await your confession."

Completely mastered, she replied in a hollow voice :

"Very well. Yes, it was I who killed him."

"Ah! wretch! wretch! "

"Yes, wretch. For I loved him, and would have shed my blood for him. I had followed him to Loewenbrunn, in spite of all he could do. Ah! what torture it was! I felt that the woman was quite near. If she had only been

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his mistress, perhaps I should have been resigned. I knew what was usually a Queen's lot, and I understood that there was scarcely one a happy wife. I also realized that though deceived they were not permitted, like other women, to complain aloud or take their revenge. Then I had prayed to God so often to deliver me from jealousy! No, really, if Hermann had only been her lover I believe that by the grace of God I should have suffered in silence. But in this case there was something else. Yet I did not desire to descend to espionage. One day an unknown—an emissary of Otto's, without a doubt—delivered to me an anonymous note which informed me of Hermann's appointment with Mademoiselle de Thalberg, and pointed out to me a way of getting to them. I instructed Tauchnitz, an old servant in whom I had every confidence, to wait for me at eight o'clock that evening outside the gardens with the private carriage. At the corner of the park of Orsova I alighted. I walked along by the side of the wall a few minutes as far as a postern which was only latched. I went straight to the villa. The night was warm, and the window was open. I saw them through the window, and as the drawing-room was lighted they could not see me. I saw and heard. I listened to what she said to Hermann and his answer. I swear to you upon my hope of redemption that she was taking from me not only my husband's heart, but his honour, his crown, and my son's crown, too. I entered the room. I remember that I

cried out : ‘ Ah ! wretched girl ! wretched girl ! ’ I accused him of being a coward and a deserter. I do not know what answer he made me. She clung to him, and he dragged her towards the door, turning upon me eyes full of terror and hate. I understood that it was over ; that if I allowed him to go he would never return ; I realized that I was assisting at the greatest crime a king could commit. I had to prevent it. My next act, how could I have done it ? But I did ; things like these appear simple and necessary at the moment they are accomplished. A weapon was at hand. I fired at them hap- hazard : they were too mixed up for me to take aim. He fell. Afterwards I went away. I abandoned in that house, left to the kisses of that girl, the body of the Heir Apparent. I rejoined Tauchnitz at the corner of the park, and got back to Loewenbrunn about ten o’clock. I had arranged that my absence should not be noticed, and my ladies all thought I had retired to my chamber. Now, sire, pronounce judgment on me.”

She knelt down. The King signed to her to rise.

“ I believe you, madam, and I absolve you. I can see God’s hand in it all. You are not guilty ; but I am the most unfortunate of men. Alas ! at a time when most rulers display such a weakness of heart, I have done, I can honestly say, my whole duty as King. I have restrained in myself natural affection and egoistic passions. I married, when still a young man, a woman whom I did not love,

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only consulting in my choice the interests of the country, and I have been faithful to the Queen, whose soul is now with God. For fifty years I have worked ten hours a day, and as long as I had the strength not for a moment did I excuse myself from my hard parade of royalty. Then I had the sorrow of seeing the people become dissatisfied with their King, and of feeling that no part of my soul or faith had descended to my sons. Now God has permitted one of them to commit the crime of Cain, and allowed them both to perish in one day, because one of them lacked virtue and the other faith. Therefore I fear that my death, which is not far distant, may not only be the end of a good fellow of a King, but the end of a race, and perhaps the end of a kingdom. At all times let us harden our hearts. Despair is a crime. The faith and virtue which my sons lacked, you, my daughter, have inherited, and my grandson is in good hands. The old trunk may yet grow green once more! God Himself lets us know that He has not yet abandoned us, since in striking He has delivered our enemies into our hands and armed us against them. Be reassured, madam; you have nothing to fear. Audotia Latanief will be condemned and hanged, I am sure of that."

The Princess shuddered with horror:

"What, sire, condemn her now you know her to be innocent?"

"Audotia is not innocent."

"She is not guilty of the Prince's death. Since her arrest the thought that another might

be condemned for my crime has tortured me, and if you had not forced me just now to speak the truth, I hope that God would have given me courage to denounce myself before Audotia was sentenced."

"This woman," the King said, "has a thousand times before deserved death, and besides, if she were not hung as a murderess, she would be as the instigator of the murder. We are not, therefore, doing her a wrong. But she must be condemned as a regicide. Reasons of State demand it."

"Reasons of State? But that is horrible! For if Audotia were only judged upon her admissions and the charges brought against her, are you sure that she would be sentenced to death? She deserves death, perhaps; but you can only bring it about by public deception. The morality of kings, therefore, is not the same as that of other men?"

"No, madam. You know very well that it is not; and on that account I have been able to pardon you. But do not be pained; I take the entire responsibility, and I will answer for it before God, who will soon be my Judge."

"But if the sentence must be pronounced, could you not at least conciliate justice and the interest of the realm by commuting Audotia's sentence, and perhaps, after a time, by permitting her to escape?"

"No, madam. What I have said will come to pass."

"Sire, spare me this remorse, I beg of you. I feel I am so weak, since I have taken life.

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Do not hand me over to this spectre. One is enough, I swear to you."

The old man's voice trembled with anger.

"Madam, you forget that I am also your judge. I pray you to allow me to do my duty. That is the only condition on which I forgive you for the death of my son."

He dismissed her with a gesture.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Now Hellborn was very annoyed. He had at first reckoned on playing the comfortable part of a wisely reforming minister to a prudent and liberal young prince : he had happened on a dreamer who had terrified him by his good faith and ingenuous logic. Disowned by the people, who reproached him with the hypocritical miscarriage of the projects of reform, accomplice of the Conservative party, but at the same time suspected by them, the old lawyer thought that his resignation, being a public disavowal of the imprudence of Prince Hermann, would restore the confidence of the Reform party in him. The death of the Prince and the return of Christian XVI to power had overthrown his hopes. It was evident that the first care of the Count de Moellnitz would be to remove him from the new Ministry. On the following day the beautiful Countess, with that facility which some women have for forgetting the favours they have granted, had treated him with indifference, almost as an intruder.

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It was only by dint of insistence and the invoking of urgent and mysterious motives that he succeeded in obtaining a private interview with the Countess, about a month after the drama of Orsova.

She was wearing pale green crêpe de chine embroidered with large black bats, and she was reading, or appeared to be reading, Lord Beaconsfield's *Endymion*, as she smoked opiate cigarettes. Hellborn kissed her hand with a deliberation meant to be significant. She allowed him to do so without displaying any emotion.

Then he rapidly came to business :

"I suppose your husband has no intention of reserving me a post? "

"I do not think so," she said.

"I don't mind telling you that I shall go without any regrets, for the circumstances are not very inviting. But first of all I have a communication to make to you."

"Well? "

"His Royal Highness Prince Renaud is dead."

"He, too? "

"Yes; death is very prevalent in the family." He took from his pocket an envelope covered with stamps and swelling with papers.

"This letter came this morning, addressed to Prince Hermann. I took it upon myself to open it, being, since my resignation, still entrusted with current business. These documents establish the fact that Prince Renaud,

called Jean Werner, died at Aden of yellow fever. I have said nothing to the King about it yet. I thought there was no hurry to give him such news."

"You did well."

Hellborn paused, like an actor desiring to surprise the audience, and said with theatrical effect :

"It is so much the better that Prince Renaud is alive?"

"What do you mean?"

"There was with the papers a letter in which Prince Renaud explained to his cousin that he desired to disappear officially, and begged him to keep the secret, according to his promise. Here is the letter."

"Give it me."

"What is the use of it?"

Hellborn put the letter and papers back in his pocket and buttoned his coat.

"I am thinking of one thing," he said. "It is not impossible that Prince Renaud, when he learns of the double death which in one day has made him the second heir to the throne, will change his mind and feel a sudden desire to come to life again. It is not impossible for Princess Wilhelma to encounter such difficulties in her *rôle* as Regent that in the end she will resign her post.

"In that case Prince Renaud would replace her. What am I saying? It is not impossible that little Prince Wilhelm, weak and ailing as he is. . . . Yes, anything may happen. Now

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(I am talking most seriously) it would be quite contrary to the interests of the kingdom for Prince Renaud, whose strange ideas you are well acquainted with, to come into office. Fortunately these papers, which are quite in order, allow us to consider him as dead, whatever he may do. If the necessity arose and he were to come and disturb our plans, he could be politely deported as the usurper of a false title. In that way peace for a long time would be assured to the faithful servants of the State, who would then be the masters. They would only have one person to fear: the holder of this letter, who, of course, would be able to resuscitate Prince Renaud. Have I made myself clear? "

"Strange! very strange!" the Countess said.

"Is it not? "

The Countess had the speciality of being an "enigmatic" woman, because she was of a pearly slenderness, because she had eyes of changing colour, because she dressed after the style of Rossetti's "Blessed Virgin," because she abused anesthetics, and because, born with a taste for Auber, Cabanel and the stories of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, she affected to be only able to bear ultra-modern art, music and literature. In reality she was a very simple little animal, somewhat capricious and voluptuous, but very rapacious, lucid and selfish.

She turned lazily towards Hellborn, fixed

upon his dark and robust figure her thoughtful eyes, and in an expiring voice said :

“Come and see me again to-morrow, my dear minister.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

Now here is Renaud's letter. It will be noticed that he makes serious and somewhat clumsy efforts to connect general ideas, that he has a few illusions about America, and that he is one of those who dream their life rather than live it.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—This letter is, as I forewarned you, to let you know that I am no more. I am sending you the death certificate of Jean Werner, who died on the 8th of October at Aden. This fraud did not cost me much. There are obliging people everywhere. Enclosed is a second paper establishing that Jean Werner was none other than Prince Renaud. I beg of you to make public the news of my death, as you promised me.

"I do not want to let even yourself know the new name I have assumed. Don't raise the objection that I could have disappeared and gone to live where I pleased under any name that suited me without officially dying. I desired it to be difficult for me to become once more Prince Renaud even if I were some day tempted to do so. That day my false civil position would be a hindrance to me. Even if

I presented myself to you in my real name, you would not be sure of my identity. I am putting you on your guard from this time onward against any good-looking fellow who says he is your cousin. What would you have? It is very amusing to me to outlive myself.

"I made Lollia's parents an allowance on condition that they went to live three hundred leagues away from Marbourg. At Malta, during our stay there, a Roman Catholic priest married us. My little friend was always good and gentle. But she worshipped her body too much. I grieved her every time I tried to be her husband. Perhaps she regretted, too, that I would not be a Prince.

"At Chicago the first thing she asked me was to take her to the circus. During the whole of the performance she held my hand in her own. But on the following day she disappeared, leaving me a letter in which she loyally explained to me that she could not give up her art, that she was returning to the circus, that she could not resist the attraction, but in spite of that she loved me very dearly, hoped her departure would not cause me too much pain, and besides she would be always faithful to me. I felt that she was telling the truth.

"I have come to the end, I hope, of sentimental complications. My love for little Tosti was not simple enough. I have found a beautiful Mulatto, perfectly stupid and docile. That suffices for me.

"I have at last discovered the only life which suits me. In a sparsely populated region of the State of X——, I have fashioned an estate

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of three thousand hectares. The position is one of extreme magnificence. I shall grow cereals there and graze vast flocks, applying to my cultivation and breeding the latest processes of science and industry. There indeed I shall be a Prince.

"I think of you very often, my dear Hermann. I saw from the last news I received that you had re-established order in Marbourg by means of a reign of terror. So bitter necessity reduced you to the practices which made our ancestors hated. You undertook the task of a King with the heart and intelligence of a free man. That contradiction was your undoing.

"Injustice is for ever the mistress of ancient Europe. The rough objections of men of good sense prevail against the socialistic Utopia. Supposing even, after long convulsions, bloody revolutions, and alternations of a demagogic Republic and military despotism, this Utopia were one day to some extent realized; the imaginary picture has little attraction for me. Every individual would satisfy his hunger; but the beauty of life would have departed.

"Two ends can be assigned to humanity. The democratic ideal is to assure every one half comfort; that is without doubt desirable; but, given human nature, that can only take place by a public and universal compression from which the *élite* would specially suffer, and to which they would succumb. The aristocratic ideal would be to obtain the total and harmonious development of a small number of superior beings, in whom, according to the elliptic formula of one of your sages, the universe

would become more and more ashamed of itself ; but that can only come about through the sacrifice, or at least the placing in oblivion of millions and millions of inferior creatures ; and this is hard, it allows of too much indifference among the privileged to the ills of others, and consequently implies contradiction, for a superior conscience cannot be conceived without infinite goodness.

“ Heroic persons, it is true, assign to humanity a third end, which would be neither for the comfort of all nor the superior life of a few. They say we are not born for pleasure, that the solution of all difficulties will be for every one to prefer others to self and learn that renunciation of pleasure is the best of all pleasures. That dream is very evidently the wildest of all chimeræ. I discard it and keep to the other two.

“ But I say that a person must be able to conciliate these two dreams. This conciliation is not possible in the old world, especially the part of it I know best, Europe. The democratic ideal and the other are there condemned to eternal conflict. All we can see is that the first is about to do a wrong to the second, but without having much chance of triumphing itself. The old world is too small ; the earth is exhausted : it does not furnish a sufficient superfluity, and the supply of necessities to every one is an immense drain upon its resources. Then this old world is too weighed down with memories, too involved in traditions of violence, authority and useless legislation. It bends beneath exorbitant charges, and the

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waste of human effort is excessive. Europe maintains ten million soldiers. The amount of work and intelligence expended for the organization and perfecting of real armies is incalculable. With the millions her armies cost her, Europe could remodel her industrial material and double her means of communication. But it would be necessary to begin by wiping out the frontiers, and there all her past, by which she is imprisoned, stands in Europe's way. Only, in spite of monstrous difficulties, France might in a century or two, thanks to the mildness of her manners and the deep-rooted generosity of spirit, approach the democratic ideal. But what must she suffer first?

"It is very probable that there is not much more for this decrepit world to do. A sterile and mournful anxiety torments it. In art and literature it is coming back, from excess of science and at the same time anæmia, to the lisp, and in love it borders on perverse impotence. The distinguished *littérateurs* who have undertaken to give it back a soul have not the faith to make gestures and lead a crusade in which the cross is only a metaphor. While they preach the gospel, they do not even get as far as the practice of charity. But even were they endowed with perfect charity, that would not suffice. The ills of humanity cannot be cured by virtues which will never be in the possession of more than an imperceptible minority.

"It is to the new world the eyes of those, who believe that the existence of the planet Terra

is not an accident devoid of any kind of significance, must turn.

"I have not always loved America. At the time when I was steeped in the learned language of the old world's civilization and in its atmosphere saturated with memories, I deplored the discovery of the American continent. I remembered that this new world was first of all steeped in blood by the wickedness and rapacity of men, and that it revenged itself by poisoning in us the springs of life. Then the people who came from there did not please me. The Yankee type offended my gentleness and natural indolence. Oh! these men who are only in the world to build railways and machines, to exploit mines, to lose and make their fortunes over again a dozen times, who do not dream, are not idle, and who, in the midst of a life set upon the accumulation of wealth, preserve the necessity of putting themselves right with the Great Unknown as with a client or a creditor, and of being the flock of one of the thirty-six thousand churches which a liberal interpretation has drawn from the Bible! Oh what a marvellous amalgam it is of religious sentiment and the most egoistic skill in business. Oh what enormous and exhilarating hypocrisy it all is! I was scandalized that it was a characteristic of this race to strive for worldly prosperity with a fury far removed from the spirit of the gospel, and at the same time to cling to the idea that they had God on their side even in doubtful business transactions, and were in communication with Him in their offices.

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"I have changed these unintelligent and severe views. These men are only in the first period of legitimate development; but they are already inaugurating the complete life. They are greedy, but neither timid nor avaricious; their idealism is as sincere and natural as their rapacity. Their religious instinct is freely exercised: they make or choose their religion. Their business—that is the right word—with the Eternal (giving, giving) recalls the relations which very long ago men had with their divinities. In the same way their activity, audacity and initiative is that of primitive man, of those who invented everything: fire, brass, iron, the virtues of plants, wheels, carts, boats and sails, and who would disown us, the cowardly dreamers of the old continent, as their sons. In short, it is like a race making a fresh beginning ten thousand years,—or twenty thousand, perhaps—after the appearance of mankind on this planet.

"This humanity has chances of success where we have failed. Here alone the dream of necessities for all and a complete life for some are simultaneously realizable. America (I am particularly referring to the United States) is free from the servitudes of all sorts which our long history imposes upon us. The wastage of strength is less there than elsewhere. Having no army and hardly any taxes, the government machine is reduced to a minimum. Pauperism is only known in a few large cities where emigrants congregate. There are no classes, no castes. Social relations here are solely the result of natural

and business intercourse or sympathy between individuals; they are not regulated, as with us, by the prejudices of centuries, the origin of which would be found to be injustice and violence. Here the human creature is intact, or can become so once more.

"Life is good here, at the same time comfortable, near to nature, and ennobled by boldness and contempt of death. The soil, still nearly virgin, is almost unbounded in extent, and its aspects are inexpressible. In their majesty. We have rivers as broad as lakes, lakes as vast as oceans, and mountains twice the size of the Alps which are the backbone of the earth. To exploit this new world we have all the resources elaborated by the civilization of the old world. It is a patriarchal life, supplemented and adorned by the latest inventions. Imagine Adam cast upon a new earth bursting with fecundity, not naked, but having at his disposal Edison's science and machinery. Abraham, or if you prefer it, the shepherd Eumacus, kills his animals by machinery and sends them to Europe, preserved in the refrigerating chambers of mighty steamers.

"Here every one eats, and some think nobly. Do you doubt it? I do not swear it is so now, but it will soon be. If the social problem and the problem of humanity can be solved, if humanity has not been created in vain, if it has a task to perform, an object to attain, and if the object is to be accomplished, it will be first of all attained here. This continent has been given to men somewhat late, so that they

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may profit by all that has been done and suffered upon the other parts of their planet.

"I know the advantages of the old world, the treasures of art and poetry it possesses which we do not. Yes, we are here without manuscripts, title-deeds or monuments. So much the better! We are free from the nostalgia of the past, which enervates, from that charm of Regret with which the soul is enveloped at Rome, Florence, Bruges, Munich, Granada, and even Paris, in every place where are particularly accumulated the monuments of the famous dead. Memory is always sad, the more centuries it extends the more sorrowful it is. Besides, this new world will have some day its poetry, which will be spontaneous and not bookish. It will have its own art, which will be beautiful (why not?), and as different from ancient art as its materials and mechanical processes are from those of the past. Metallic architecture, which is only in its infancy, has already at its best the beauty of precision in enormity, and nothing equals the splendour of the twilight across its iron tracery. What I would desire for us would be to entirely forget the art of Europe, so to re-invent under different conditions of material and sentimental life.

"But what need have I now of plastic representations of reality? I feel that I am born again; my body is strengthened. I spend my days riding through a glorious land, where the air is as soft and pure as that which the first man breathed between the four rivers. I watch sunsets which give me in some way the direct

sensation of the earth's form, of the shape of the solar system of which it is part, and of cosmic infinity. I enjoy it ineffably without studying it. For I am quite curd of the pretended suffering of thought. I see in it unbearable vanity. One sees very well without believing and knowing. It is not even necessary to hope. Every man who complains of life and yet lives is a liar: suicide only proves that more sorrow than pleasure has been found in life. I give to thoughtless dreaming what I formerly gave to pretentious melancholy. I am happy.

"I shall not write to you again. When you lose your crown, which will not be very long now, let me know through the papers whether you would like to come and join me. Then I will provide the means for you to do so.

"I send you my love, and sign myself for the last time

"RENAUD."

CHAPTER XXXV

CHRISTIAN XVI was growing weaker every day. He had made up his mind to don his military uniform for the abdication ceremony. But the throne being uncomfortable and too hard, he had taken up his position at the foot of the daïs in his invalid chair.

The Princess Regent entered first, holding the hand of little Wilhelm, who was proud of his uniform as a Colonel of the Guard.

"Sire," she said, "bless your grandson."

The old man placed his heavy, gnarled hand upon the sickly child's large head.

"Little child, little King come so late, may God give you the spirit of faith, strength, justice and prudence! May He make you always know the truth! May you be less troubled and happier than your father!"

When the Court, in deep mourning, had taken up positions on either side of the daïs, King Christian, as pale as wax, with his white beard hanging down upon his tunic and half concealing the ribbon of the Order of the Blue Eagle, said in a toothless and quavering voice:

"Lord Chancellor, will you be good enough

to read our deed of abdication, and also that by which we appoint her Royal Highness Princess of Marbourg Regent of the realm?"

The Lord Chancellor, Count de Moellnitz, standing before a square table covered with purple tapestry with gold fringe (the royal table of historic melodrama), unrolled a parchment from which hung an orange seal larger than a wafer, and punctuating the phrases with a nod of his bird-like head, he read slowly in tones like those of an officiating archbishop:

"We, Christian XVI, by the grace of God, King of Alfania, to all present and to come, greeting.

"Considering——"

A noise from without drowned his voice. The King had desired on that day his subjects should be allowed some liberty in the streets, and had ordered his gardens to be opened to them, considering that the memory of the two tragic murders and the tender age of the little orphan King would touch the people's childish soul. The crowd had therefore assembled beneath the windows of the throne-room, at first simply out of curiosity and uncertain of its own sentiments. But men had glided through the groups letting fall seditious words; furtive hands had distributed leaflets pointing out the injustice of the sentence of death which had been pronounced the evening before on Audotia Latanief, the odium of the accusations levelled against the Socialist party, and the insolence of the decree which entrusted the regency to the most unpopular of Princesses. Now a

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murmur of dissatisfaction surrounded the palace. Moellnitz left off reading. The noise increased and became confused and threatening.

"Show yourself, madam," the King said to Wilhelma.

An usher opened a window, and the Princess stepped on to the balcony.

The noise rushed more loudly and distinctly into the throne-room. Cries could be heard :

"Down with the Regent !"

Wilhelma, with her head high, stood motionless beneath her black veil.

Then Christian XVI was taken in his invalid chair to the Princess's side.

The people, at the sight of their old King, became silent. It was a mighty frigid silence, born of respect, not love.

Quickly the Princess returned to the room ; she went to fetch little Wilhelm, who was trembling in every limb and wailing : "Mamma, I am afraid," as she picked up the child in her arms and presented him to the people.

The crowd was undecided for a few seconds of vague and hesitating rumour. Then a woman's voice could be clearly heard saying :

"What a nice little fellow."

Another voice cried :

"Long live the King !"

The shout spread, and was soon a unanimous roar.

"Long live the King ! Long live the King !"

The Lord Chancellor, Count de Moellnitz, leant towards Minister Hellborn, who was once again his dearest friend.

"Oh! perfect! We must let the people see him from time to time."

"Poor little fellow!" Hellborn said. "They feel sorry for him. How long will it last?"

The next morning at daybreak Audotia Latanief was hanged. The police on foot and a few regiments of cavalry preserved order.

A few hours later, in the lake in the park at Orsova, was discovered the body of Frida de Thalberg. A man happened to see, amid the reeds near the bank, her red-gold hair.

THE END

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